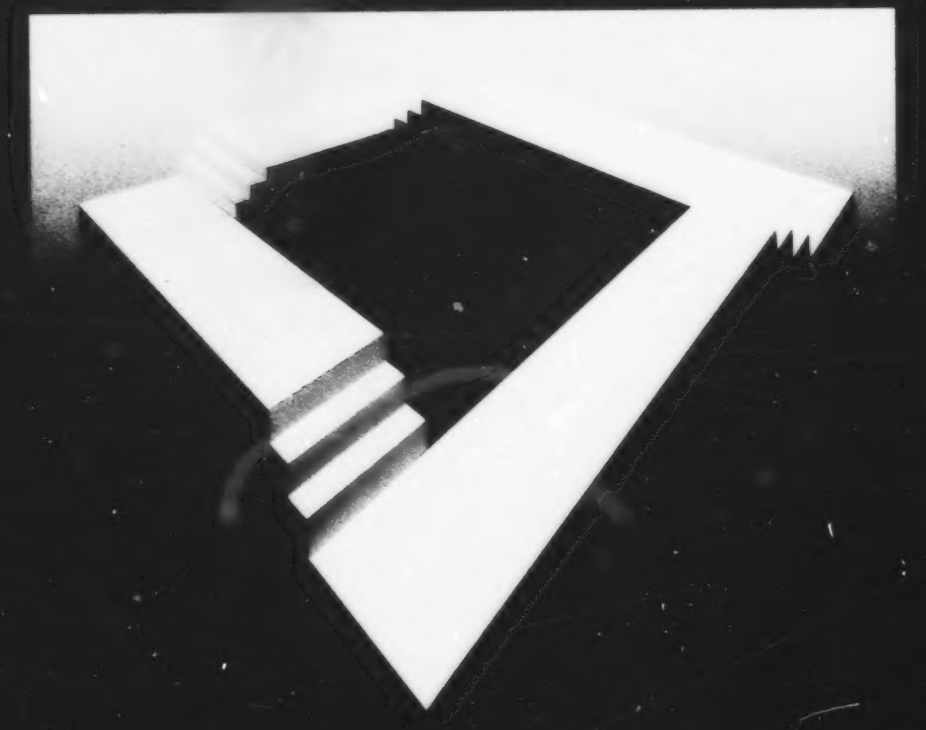
EQUALITY GAME

Women in the Federal Public Service (1908-1987)



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The EQUALITY GAME

by Nicole Morgan

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Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Conseil consultatif canadien sur la situation de la femme

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Foreword

Women have never shirked issues of dignity and rights. Along with accepting obligations towards family and community, women have spoken out against unfair practices, to make our society more humane and to ensure social justice for all.

Justice for women in the workplace ranks high among women's priorities. For decades, women have struggled for recognition of the essential nature of women's work in the home and in the labour force. Their efforts have been complicated by the burden of correcting inequities, entrenched by decades of reluctance to admit women into decision-making positions and by ill-founded assumptions about women's reasons for seeking paid employment.

Listening to women's voices, past and present, tell of their experiences is essential to an understanding of women's search for respect and equality. Through these voices, we learn not only of indignities suffered, but of progress made through the confluence of public debate spurred on by women's groups, of politicians responding to an articulate and vocal female electorate, and of government officials carrying out the political will.

As we learn from this text, those on the cutting edge of change often undergo the greatest hardships. Women who suffered sexual harassment before this indignity had a name received little compassion for their chagrin. Women whose earned credentials did nothing to gain them entry into policy development and women who were paid less than men for similar work could not expect due recognition until the Canadian Human Rights Commission was able to hear their cases against job discrimination and rule in favour of "equal pay for work of equal value".

Progress has emerged from the struggle. As our expanding economy relies increasingly on female workers, measures have been put in place by politicians responding to social imperatives and economic realities. Canada has employment equity legislation federally and in some provinces; maternity and parental leave is available through the unemployment insurance program; employment equity officers work with departments, boards, and agencies on ways to meet equity obligations. Women increasingly hold senior positions in the federal public service. At the time of writing, Huguette Labelle, an experienced administrator, is president of the Public Service Commission.

While recognizing progress achieved, we must remember our past and present challenges. Nicole Morgan's account of women in the public service in this century contributes to our understanding. The voices of the women and men she interviewed speak to the frustration and anguish of change, as women seek fair treatment and equal opportunity and as men deal with the strain of adaptation. Women in the public service do not need gallantry or chivalry, but expect mutual respect for knowledge and competence. The workplace should no longer be characterized by gender-based servant-master relationships, but by partnership and teamwork among women and men, sharing their skills, knowledge and ability, regardless of gender.

Major changes are occurring in all workplaces — on the shop floor, in offices, and on farms. As the largest employer of women in Canada, the federal public service offers an ideal laboratory to study changing gender relations. Whatever conclusions one draws from this study by Nicole Morgan, similar ones likely apply to other workplaces. Times are changing and people are trying to cope.

Women everywhere in the paid labour force are providing for their families and are contributing to the Canadian economy. Their lives are complicated by factors which have less to do with the value of the work performed than with the fact of being female. The federal government has the opportunity to offer leadership in employment equity practices. In April 1986, it made a significant first step with the passage of *Bill C-62, An Act respecting employment equity.*

The CACSW has given major consideration to the employment situation of women in the public service since its inception in 1973. It recognizes that past inequities must be corrected. Perhaps one of the Advisory Council's recommendations, adopted in June 1985, says it best:

> *The CACSW re-affirms that special measures are necessary components of any program of employment equity, to counter the effects of past discrimination.*

Hopefully, this historical review of women's struggles and successes in the public service will create greater understanding of the need for unconditional equality in the workplace.

Sylvia Gold
CACSW President

Preface

The winter of 1986 was a long one for me, as I sat and listened attentively to women and men from the federal public service speak their piece on the working relationships that bind their destinies together.

Of course, these interviews were conducted with only a small group of 52 people and constituted only one part of an otherwise quantitative and historical study. But with time, they began to look like the tip of an iceberg (or perhaps a more fitting image would be the smoke from a volcano), such was the emotional intensity of some of the interviews, both in words and in body language.

In a way, I should not have been surprised at all. Relationships between men and women are woven from so many different emotions: seduction and threats, fear and trust, attraction and resistance, tenderness and violence, indulgence and intolerance, admiration and rejection, confusion and fascination. People cannot be expected to leave their feelings outside the door when they arrive at work. Why should relationships in the public service be any different?

Some of women's experiences described in these pages are common to many workplaces. Others are indigenous to the federal public service. It is my intention to go beyond a structural description of the public service as a workplace for women and try to gain a better understanding of the reality portrayed by these interviews. I am convinced that organizations in both the public and private sectors are governed not simply by systems but by human nature. The chronic underrepresentation of women in upper echelons is due less to systemic considerations like inadequate education or motivation, than to blind, instinctive opposition from men and from some women.

Talking to men about their own fears and reactions — as seen by women — was not an easy job. Some men felt attacked by what is really only a plea by women for greater understanding of the power games in which women are often only silent observers. After all, it is the women in the public service for whose sake the rules of the game seem to have been changed ... but has anyone ever really asked for their opinion? We need to hear their voices. It is my hope that this study be the catalyst for a difficult but necessary dialogue.

I wish to thank the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women for giving me a free rein and the freedom to include the interviewees' comments as I saw fit.

I also wish to thank the Public Service Commission (PSC) for the unpublished data it supplied to me with diligence, courtesy, and a sense of fair play.

I am especially grateful to the women and men I interviewed, who will remain forever anonymous. They contributed their valuable time and spoke to me in a spirit of trust and candour. I dedicate this book to them.

Nicole Morgan

Introduction

For many people, women's progress towards equality in the labour market in general, and in the federal public service in particular, seems to be *fait accompli*; and with reason, for current statistics provide testimony to women's progress.

Women in 1987 made up 42.4% of the permanent employee population of the public service. Since 1976, the only growth has been in the number of female employees, which has increased by 10.3% over the past 11 years while the number of male employees has decreased by 14.9%.[1] Successive governments have set up a series of special programs designed to rectify the injustices of the past and to move women up the ranks.

Yet despite all the hiring and all the programs, women constitute only 8.7% (223) of the Executive category and 13.2% (258) of the Senior Management category, and still make up 82.8% (55,825) of the Administrative Support category.[2] As a result, 83.9% of women have a salary of less than $35,000,[3] compared with 54.7% of men.

It is not my intention to try to explain this phenomenon using conventional research methods. Instead, I will take another tack and propose three hypotheses upon which to base this analysis. The **first hypothesis** is as follows:

If one wishes to understand the situation of women in the public service, one must

- stop trying to explain the phenomenon in terms of **what women lack** to be equal to men, and try instead to understand how men have **resisted** the idea of sharing their territory and their privileges;
- abandon all linear and quantitative models that would have women arriving in the public service one at a time and gradually making their way up the ranks in a movement called progress;
- abandon the utterly simplistic notion that women form a unified group, a sort of union negotiating a greater share of responsibility.

This is different from analysing women's meagre representation in management by analysing women only. (Are women poorly qualified or merely less qualified? Are they less motivated? Do their family responsibilities prevent them from progressing as rapidly as they would like?) It is also different from the "critical mass" theory that states we must be patient and wait until women, with the help of education, experience, female networking and government programs, gradually fill the middle and then the upper ranks to a point where they reach sufficient numbers to sweep aside the resistance of the past. I propose a complementary viewpoint, namely that the rise of women in the public service has been complex, more up and down than a straight-line progression, and that women sometimes pay a high price.

Of course, it was not only in the federal service that such difficulties in the sharing of territory were experienced, nor were the divisions always along the lines of gender. It is significant, however, that the federal service has always been the largest employer of women in the country and therefore serves as a *de facto* model. An examination of the federal public service as an employer provides a vital case study of women's progress in the workplace. As well, women's experiences in the public service have been documented since the beginning of the century, enabling us to trace our origins and our evolution.

The linear models of women's progress are based on the idea that the structure and mandate of the public service or any other organization are static, that they form a sort of passive block from which anyone can come and carve out an equal share thanks to affirmative action programs. But organizations grow, shrink, change their mandate, adapt their product, target different clienteles, restructure their human resources — in short, they are constantly changing to suit their own requirements and those of the environment around them. This is true not only in the private sector; the public sector, too, is not nearly as stable and permanent as people often think. Despite the fact that the public service is a fluctuating organism, its culture is rooted in the past and still unconsciously bears its marks.[4] As in all workplaces, both history and societal change have affected women's working lives.

Women bear the mark of social conditioning and their reactions to change are often varied. Resistance has not only been from men.

The **second hypothesis** derives from the first.

The federal public service is a subculture organized around an internal power which is perhaps unknown to outsiders but is present in a very forceful way for those on the inside.

Statistics indicate that this power within the public service has been male. The interviews confirmed that, like most vested interest groups, the power brokers in the public service used all the resources at their disposal to protect themselves. It was also indicated that this real power is many-headed and moves from department to department, agency to agency, group to group, and individual to individual. Access to and knowledge of this power are the keys that open the door to a career; these keys were often beyond women's reach.

The **third hypothesis** derives from the second.

Salary and job level are not the only stakes in the bureaucracy game.

Two jobs may have equal pay but are not necessarily equal in responsibility and authority. In addition to generating endless frustration, this discrepancy leads to unspoken power games, which leave women vulnerable to unclear and sometimes hostile forces.

Methodology

In putting together the story of women in the public service, we are fortunate to have almost a complete record in the form of a series of annual reports, data, and regulations dating from the turn of the century to the present. This kind of research material is exceptional in labour force history, which is often pieced together from fragments of data. We are fortunate to be able to witness the story unfold in **slow motion**, because bureaucracies tend to change more slowly than society.[5]

The abundance of data made it necessary for me to use a variety of methods ranging from approximate reconstitution to high-precision computer data analysis:

- **The early years** (1908 to the 1930s), for which there are very few witnesses left, were reconstituted from archives, annual reports, and reports from royal commissions;
- **The recent past** (the 1940s and subsequent years) was put together from official documents, personal accounts and statistics, which are sometimes incomplete, ambiguous, or incompatible with more modern methods;
- **The present** was put together from general unpublished data compiled specially for this book by the Public Service Commission. In addition, the staffing systems (competitions, hiring, evaluations, promotions, demotions, and so on) are described from a statistical perspective and from the viewpoint of the people involved, as expressed in a series of in-depth interviews.

This study deals only with the "small" public service, that is, the one governed by the *Public Service Employment Act*. The categories and levels used are those found in the official classification. The public service is divided into six major occupational categories: Management; Scientific and Professional; Administrative and Foreign Service; Technical (these four are all officer categories); Administrative Support; and Operational. Each category comprises job groups ranked by level. These levels are the basis for classification by organizational level. The management category consists of two executive levels (EX 4-5, EX 1-3) and senior management levels (SM).[6] The levels in the other categories are: senior managers, middle managers, officers, and support staff.

Fifty-two people (31 women and 21 men) were interviewed, some more than once. They were selected on the basis of several criteria. First, the **amount of time spent in the public service**: only those who had spent a minimum of five years in the service were interviewed. Second, **representation**: despite the limited number of people interviewed, an attempt was made to achieve a good cross-section in terms of job level, language, age, and minority groups, and care was taken to interview people who had worked outside the National Capital Region (Ottawa/Hull). The third criterion was their **interest in the topic**: the interviewees were selected on the basis of interest they had always shown in the public service in general and women's issues in particular.

The interviews were open-ended, and each person was asked to reflect on his/her personal experience of the working relationship between men and women. As the interviews progressed, each person was also asked to reflect on comments made by previous interviewees, so that a sort of dialogue was set up with the interviewer as the intermediary. The majority of the interviews were an hour and a half, but some lasted more than six hours. Most interviews were remarkable for their frankness, and many were charged with emotion. I have tried to preserve the flavour of the vocabulary as much as possible, and have taken the necessary steps to ensure anonymity.

Notes

1. In 1976, there were 145,555 men and 82,462 women (excluding the Post Office Department). [Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1976* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1977).] In 1987, the figures were 123,790 men and 90,945 women. [Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1988).]

2. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987*.

3. *Ibid.* (current dollars; "unknowns" excluded).

4. Culture refers to the set of values which are shared by individuals and which justify their beliefs, expectations, and attitudes. See the excellent study by Yvan Allaire and Mihaela E. Firsirotu, *Culture in Organizations: Theoretical Scope of a Metaphor*, Working paper no. 11-83 (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Centre de recherche en gestion, 1983).

5. The regulating effect of bureaucratic slowness was one of the major topics of Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

6. The SM level was created only in 1981 and is a composite of the superior levels of several groups. To ensure uniformity in this study, it has been reconstructed for the years prior to 1981. Please note that the Senior Management level (SM) in the management category is not the same as the Senior Management level in other categories. As well, prior to 1981 the EX's were called SX's. Again, to ensure uniformity, SX's have been converted to EX's for the years prior to 1981.

Reticence (1908-1959)

... a much larger number of qualified women than of men are prepared to accept the minimum salary offered.[1]

Civil Service Commission

It would be an erroneous view of the history of women in general, and of the public service in particular, to believe that Canadian women remained at home for the first half of the century and that it was only orphan "girls" and deserving "old maids" who gradually infiltrated the ranks of the federal service. In fact, women, both married and unmarried, have always worked in the public service and sometimes, as we shall see later on, in great numbers. At first they were rejected systematically as a group, then accepted only when labour power became rare, and finally they found themselves confined to low-ranking, dead-end jobs for decades.[2]

Rejection on principle

The annual reports of the Civil Service Commission from 1908 to 1920 clearly show that the public service was designed exclusively for men and that it constituted a sort of appendage to political authority, which at that time was, of course, male. The reports also clearly indicate that women would not have been let in so quickly had the salaries not been so low that males did not bother applying. In short, women accepted the jobs that few men would take.

The annual reports of the Civil Service Commission and of the royal commissions discussed the matter with a disarming candour that disappeared with time. The 1908 Annual Report quoted above is a prime example. Its authors admitted their prejudices:

> *It is freely admitted that there are women who have quite as good executive ability as men, and who might, on the mere ground of personal qualifications, fill the higher positions ... There are many others [positions], however, especially those of the higher grades, where a number of the duties would be quite unsuitable for women. There would be difficulties also, some of them, it is true,* ***the result of prejudice****, but nonetheless real, were a woman to be appointed to administer an office or section of a department involving the control and direction of a number of male clerks.*[3] (emphasis added)

The 1908 Royal Commission on the Civil Service betrayed its anxiety:

> *... yet the influx of such a large number [of women] must, if continued, in the course of time, utterly swallow up the lower grades of the service and by limiting the field for promotion [of men] to the higher classes prove detrimental to the development of the higher and more responsible branches of the service; for it can hardly be admitted yet that the work devolving on the departments can be carried on with a staff composed entirely of women.*[4]

In an effort to compromise between the desire to save money and the fear of feminizing the profession, in 1921, directives allowed deputy ministers to specify the gender of candidates qualified for certain positions. Also in the same year, women's jobs were indirectly made into temporary positions when an embargo was placed upon the employment of married women.

> *Married women could be appointed only when required to be self-supporting or on a temporary basis when a sufficient number of qualified candidates was not otherwise available.*[5]

When a woman married, she had to resign or keep her new status a secret. Judging by the annual reports for subsequent years, the latter occurred frequently.[6] Other women married openly, left, and were sometimes rehired when necessity dictated. They started again at the bottom of the heap, at the minimum pay rate for that class and of course in a temporary position.

Necessity

During the 1920s and 1930s, women slipped into almost total oblivion, working as stenographers, typists, secretaries, and girl Fridays. Men had become used to having them around; but they were so invisible that in the annual reports for 1920, 1921 and 1922, they were counted under the statistical category of "Women and Boys". Men were classified as "Veterans" and "Civilian Men".

And yet when one subtracts the "Boys",[7] the result is surprising: not only did women exist, but they existed in large numbers. In 1921, for example, women made up 23.3%[8] of the work force in the National Capital Region, which is remarkable for a time when the average national participation rate of women in the labour force was 15.5%. From 1920 to 1939, the Commission appointed 22,253 women (17,675 temporaries and 4,578 permanent employees), whereas during the same period it appointed 55,292 civilian men (44,637 temporaries and 10,655 permanent employees): women thus accounted for 28.7% of the civilian appointments (see Table 1).

Even more remarkable was the fact that women survived the massive influx of First World War veterans, who were given hiring priority under the *Civil Service Employment Act*. The Veterans' Preference Clause was the longest and most powerful affirmative action program ever applied in the federal service, as well as being the least contested. Between 1920 and 1939, when the service had a total of about 30,000 employees, the Civil Service Commission appointed 32,693 veterans, or nearly 40% (37.2%) of all male appointments.[9]

Of course not all of them remained in the public service. However, many of them stayed long enough that when the Second World War brought a second generation of veterans (68.2% of male appointments between 1945 and 1949), the civil service became the largest reserve army in the country.[10] From the 1920s on, the history of women in the federal service cannot be understood unless projected on a paramilitary subculture.

Table 1. Permanent and temporary appointments by gender and status, 1920 to 1939

	Veterans		*Civilian Men*		*Women**	
	Permanent	**Temporary**	**Permanent**	**Temporary**	**Permanent**	**Temporary**
1920	–**	439	–**	3,998	–**	1,551
1921	–**	2,962	–**	2,604	–**	1,124
1922	1,261	1,570	712	1,786	374	700
1923	1,284	1,051	574	1,127	252	656
1924	1,066	1,020	537	898	366	468
1925	1,085	877	761	1,437	323	614
1926	635	934	575	1,222	305	791
1927	723	933	678	1,769	391	855
1928	746	1,083	898	2,292	364	816
1929	865	976	1,152	2,851	475	1,114
1930	735	869	831	2,341	314	1,370
1931	796	1,139	1,245	2,728	462	1,147
1932	244	567	290	1,161	104	567
1933	48	480	32	977	3	268
1934	23	609	17	1,270	1	454
1935	89	741	103	1,533	41	669
1936	322	1,117	384	2,927	80	903
1937	738	1,339	841	3,653	462	778
1938	331	1,189	354	3,439	121	935
1939	309	1,498	671	4,624	140	1,895
Total	**11,300**	**21,393**	**10,655**	**44,637**	**4,578**	**17,675**

Source: Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Reports*, 1920 to 1939.
Notes: *From 1920 to 1922, the appointments of women included a few appointments of boys.
**Figures not available.

Logically speaking, the stenography and typing jobs could have been offered to the veterans, after both world wars, and it would have been seen as perfectly normal to send the women home. In fact, the Commission did so several times, notably during the Depression when the service underwent severe cutbacks. In 1931, for example, Order-in-Council P.C. 189/1118 on the absorption of surplus employees from the Department of the Interior stated that "married women who were employed in the Government service should be replaced by surplus Interior employees."[11] Moreover, one might expect that unemployed men, whether veterans or civilians, would have willingly accepted the low-paying jobs in the third division.[12] One need only open a book describing those dark years to see that men did take jobs elsewhere at much lower salaries and under conditions that would be described today as inhumane.

However, that was not the case. Table 1 shows that the percentage of temporary female appointments did, of course, decrease during the flood of veterans' appointments (1921 to 1925) and during the Depression (1932 to 1935); nevertheless, women still accounted for nearly 30% of all civilian appointments. Women had ceased to be surplus and had become "manpower".

First, women had become so identified in stenography and typing that the job of secretary had become a woman's job: to offer it to a man would have been an incongruity bordering on insult. The image of the male secretary was accepted only in the army, and then only for secretaries of generals. Second, secretarial skills had become indispensable in organizations, especially service organizations. As a result, politicians could not even afford to give away these positions out of charity or favouritism.

Uneducated or inexperienced males were hired as clerks. The service could turn a blind eye to the presence of a certain number of unproductive male clerks but it could not afford inefficiency at the typewriter. As a result, educated and productive women retained their positions despite the influx of veterans. As one retired woman remarked,

> *You had to be educated to be a stenographer, whereas any illiterate could be a clerk ... and a man with an education was neither a clerk nor a stenographer.*

Interestingly, the clerk's competition, for which women could have easily qualified, was denied to women. Men became clerks, while women became steno-typists. The die was cast ... for the next four decades.[13]

According to a retired woman, now age 75, the presence of women also provided a psychological as well as a bureaucratic service.

> *You have to understand that for a man, being in the civil service was a failure and being at the bottom of the heap was unbearable. But at least there were women. I know I must sound pretty radical for my age, but I saw how important egos are in the civil service. It seemed women were the only thing that kept them from going crazy with frustration.*

Compromise

With the arrival of the Second World War and men going off to the war, these very women — who had been paid mere lip service and forced to take jobs that men did not want — became so indispensable that they were now rare and valued workers.

The veterans from the First World War scarcely had been absorbed into the civil service when the Second World War broke out. The Civil Service Commission gained a sort of stewardship over the war effort. With its new responsibilities came a larger staff: between 1940 and 1944, it appointed 66,540 civilian men and 110,405 women (see Table 2). Of course these figures represent appointments, so women who occupied more than one temporary job within a year were actually counted several times. It is essential to understand that the number of appointments was far greater than the actual number of employees. Nonetheless, whether appointments or actual staff, it still remains true that the civil service had become the leading employer of women in Canada.

When the men returned from the front, female appointments decreased and were inversely proportional to appointments of veterans but still remained above the number of civilian men appointed (see Table 2). Not all women were fired and sent back to their kitchens; in fact, from 1946 to 1959, the Commission appointed 154,905 women. When the flow of veterans diminished about 1950, the numbers of civilian men and women hired each year were about equal.

Table 2. Permanent and temporary appointments by gender and by status, 1940 to 1959

	Veterans		Civilian Men		Civilian Women		Total
		%		%		%	
1940	2,449*	12.7	10,473	54.5	6,284	32.7	19,206
1941	2,806	9.0	13,824	44.5	14,413	46.4	31,043
1942	3,708	7.6	16,584	34.1	28,321	58.2	48,613
1943	4,045	7.2	15,373	27.3	36,788	65.4	56,206
1944	4,004	10.3	10,286	26.4	24,599	63.2	38,889
1945	10,899	26.6	8,106	19.8	22,002	53.6	41,007
1946	31,074	58.5	7,635	14.4	14,434	27.2	53,143
1947	18,239	54.7	5,932	17.8	9,167	27.5	33,338
1948	14,621	43.1	8,368	24.7	10,935	32.2	33,924
1949	12,975	40.3	8,939	27.8	10,273	31.9	32,187
1950	8,391	34.7	8,431	34.9	7,362	30.4	24,184
1951	7,784	26.1	10,362	34.8	11,617	39.0	29,763
1952	8,258	25.6	11,691	36.2	12,313	38.1	32,262
1953	6,682	20.4	13,372	40.9	12,605	38.6	32,659
1954	4,965	16.8	12,944	43.8	11,630	39.4	29,539
1955	3,355	14.0	9,649	40.4	10,876	45.5	23,880
1956	3,059	11.7	10,766	41.3	12,267	47.0	26,092
1957	2,680	9.0	11,986	44.3	12,411	45.8	27,077
1958	2,471	11.6	9,419	44.1	9,454	44.3	21,344
1959	2,238	10.5	9,571	44.8	9,561	44.7	21,370
Total	**154,703**	**23.6**	**213,711**	**32.6**	**287,312**	**43.8**	**655,726**

Source: Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Reports*, 1940 to 1959.
Note: *The influx of veterans from the First World War continued until the beginning of the 1940s.

By 1959, the reality had to be admitted: women were present in such numbers that the Civil Service Commission could no longer ignore them. The reasons for this were very simple. First, the public service was a rapidly growing bureaucracy and it could not find enough women to satisfy its great needs; second, competition with private industry, which was also in full expansion, was intense and many women were courted away by competitors or by marriage; and finally, the wages were low. In fact, the wages were so low that even women did not want the jobs!

Measures were taken to improve a situation which, according to one former employee, had deteriorated to a point where some young single women were living in "wretched poverty".[14] First, the Commission offered to pay their moving expenses[15] and created part-time jobs for married women, whose presence was beginning to be more widely accepted.[16] Then it helped single women find apartments (especially in Ottawa),[17] increased their salaries,[18] gave them training,[19] and lowered the age of admission.[20] It also used the powerful weapon of imagery and produced competition posters showing young men and young women sporting equally confident smiles.

But these measures were still not enough. Women had their pick of employers and the public service was far from the top of the list. The Commission, desperate for stability, had no choice but to propose to them like a proper suitor. First it allowed married women to compete for the position of clerk,[21] then in 1955 it removed all restrictions on married women, who at that time made up one-third of the female labour force.[22]

But the fear that women might take over the middle ranks was still so intense that, in 1946, the Commission authorized deputy ministers to state the required gender in competition notices. Neither did the new liberal attitude apply to the extremely rare female officers in the Foreign Service, who were obliged to resign when they married, nor to pregnant women, who had to leave as soon as their condition became apparent.[23] Restrictions on pregnant women prevailed in both the public and private sectors, and at the time no one seemed to mind it. As one retired woman explained it:

> *What you young women don't understand is that the world back then was built on values accepted by everyone. I never knew any woman to rebel against what seems to you so intolerable. It was almost a question of etiquette: men came to work in suits and false collars, even in sweltering heat. Pregnant women were not seen in public, let alone in the workplace.*

It must be added that most of the appointments, whether male or female, were temporary. For example, in 1954 (the last year in which the Commission's annual report distinguished between permanent and temporary appointments), 919 women obtained permanent positions while 10,711 women were hired on a temporary basis.[24] However, when women acquired the right to remain employed in the public service after marriage, they indirectly acquired the right to permanent jobs. As we shall see, they were to exercise this right later when the country regained its confidence in the economy and when temporary jobs gradually turned into permanent ones.

In the meantime, what do we know about the women working for the federal public service during the 1950s?

First, we know that they were employed in great numbers but that the distribution was far from uniform. Women were especially present in Ottawa, where they comprised 38% of all civil servants.[25] Their fate seemed inexorably linked to that of the veterans, in that they were hired in great numbers by the departments that were also the largest employers of veterans. Between 1940 and 1946, for example, 40% of all female appointments (58,744 out of 146,841) were made either by National Defence or Veterans' Affairs. Between 1947 and 1959, 37.6% of all female appointments went to these same two departments.[26]

At the same time, they were almost completely excluded from the immense Post Office Department (approximately 20,000 employees),[27] which for more than a decade served as a haven for veterans. (Between 1944 and 1959, 28,305 veterans were hired.) One may well ask why so many women were hired by Defence and Veterans' Affairs and so few (3% in 1955) by what was then the Post Office. The answer is obvious: the first two used steno-typists, 99.6% of whom were women, whereas the Post Office used mainly clerks and operations personnel. Said one former employee,

> *At that time, everyone knew that women needn't bother applying for a position with the Post Office.*

We also know that a few women were the exception that proved the rule. By 1957, only one woman had crossed the $10,000 line, which at that time meant that you had acquired the status of mandarin. One woman is not much compared with the 296 men who were making $10,000 or more a year, but a psychological barrier had been crossed.[28]

And finally, we know from testimonials that almost everyone accepted the existing male and female roles without question. Women's needs were not yet defined, and certainly not on the agenda. It was not until the arrival of a new generation several years later that comparisons were made and the awareness of injustice was born.

Notes

1. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *First Annual Report, 1908* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1909), p. 17.
2. Graham S. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
3. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *First Annual Report, 1908*, p. 17.
4. Cited by Kathleen Archibald in *Sex and the Public Service* (Ottawa: Public Service Commission, 1970), p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
6. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1943* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1944), p. 6.
7. In later annual reports, these were separate and were no more than ten in number.
8. Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 14.
9. The number of appointments does not necessarily equal the number of jobs. There may be several appointments to the same position in the course of a year.
10. J.E. Hodgetts et al., *The Biography of an Institution: The Civil Service Commission of Canada, 1908-1967* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).
11. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1931* (Ottawa: F.C. Acland, 1932), p. XI.
12. The civil service comprised three divisions, the third being the lowest.
13. "The Commission therefore resorted to rules, regulations and legislation to create separate male and female clerical streams, largely by confining the demand for female labour to specific tasks. There is no question that the inequality of opportunity built into the civil service bureaucracy in the early twentieth century created a cheap female labour reserve for the lowest clerical jobs." In Graham S. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution*, p. 72.
14. Towards the end of the 1940s, the starting salary of a secretary was not even sufficient to pay rent in Ottawa.
15. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1943*, p. 6.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1944* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1945), p. 6.
18. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1945* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1946), p. 6.
19. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1946* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1947), p. 6.
20. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1949* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1950), p. 6.
21. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1951* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1952), p. 7.
22. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1955* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1956), p. 9.
23. "... it was only in 1962, after the Civil Service Commission had issued directives on the matter, that maternity leave became a right ..." [but a right that was rarely exercised at first]. [Translation] In Carolle Simard, *L'administration contre les femmes: La reproduction des différences sexuelles dans la fonction publique canadienne* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1983), p. 71.
24. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1954* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1955).
25. Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 23.
26. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Reports*, 1940 to 1959.
27. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1954*.
28. Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 28.

Necessity (the 1960s)

Another interesting addition to the new law is the express prohibition against discrimination in appointment on grounds of race, national origin, colour or religion.[1]

Civil Service Commission

Once the second bout of paramilitary growing pains was over, women quietly slipped back into oblivion. They were ignored and the great reforms of the early 1960s passed them by. In 1961, for example, Parliament voted a new *Civil Service Act* to facilitate the absorption of a constantly expanding labour force. It was designed specifically to protect Canadian citizens by giving them absolute priority in job competitions. Until then, British citizens had had the right to compete for these jobs on an equal footing, and a great many of them had done so.

The new legislation also recognized the two official languages by stating that each office and each department must have a sufficient number of people able to function in French, English, or both.

In addition, the new law expressly prohibited discrimination in appointments on the grounds of race, national origin, colour, or religion. But discrimination on the basis of gender was not mentioned. The new liberal thinking stopped at a wall that was higher, deeper, and more strikingly evident — at least in hindsight — than any other cultural barrier. Women were all but left out of the Glassco Report (1962), which revolutionized management in the civil service.[2] In the single page devoted to women out of the 1,198-page report, it was stated that "while there was no official discrimination against women in recruitment, selection, classification, or pay — in practice, a number of differences in the treatment of men and women could be considered discriminatory."[3] A year before Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, the report identified the beginning of a problem.

Growth and agitation

What is especially regrettable about these oversights is that it was already possible at that time to detect the first signs that the gender differences inherent in the structure of the labour force in general, and the public service in particular, were about to be changed in a major way. The aging male civil service was showing signs of reacting to the pressure of external and internal forces. The external forces can be described as follows:

- the vitality of a young country[4] that had flung open the doors of education to young people in general and young women in particular;[5]
- an international egalitarian movement that led many countries to change their labour laws.[6]

The forces within the bureaucracy itself included:

- the renewal of the civil service mandate, the creation of new programs and, consequently, the massive hiring of a new generation of Canadians which doubled the federal public service population between 1964 and 1974;
- greater awareness of the problems of specific groups as bilingualism was actively promoted and increasing numbers of francophones were hired;
- a particularly dynamic team heading the Public Service Commission, which commissioned a study by Kathleen Archibald on women in the public service (this study was to become one of the pillars of the subsequent reforms);
- a union movement which in 1967 led to the *Public Service Staff Relations Act*, which proclaimed the equality of all employees governed by the *Public Service Employment Act*.

All these forces, combined with the fact that the Veterans' Preference Clause was producing fewer candidates, created an opportunity for large numbers of women to enter the service. Between 1960 and 1969, the growth rate for women (53.7%) was a little higher than that for men (52.7%).[7]

The growth occurred mainly in the 20 to 24 age group, which almost doubled for men (from 5,828 to 10,489) as well as for women (from 5,463 to 10,345)[8] from 1962 to 1969. For women, the important consequence was not so much the growth in their own numbers as the arrival of a new type of male colleague who would be rising in the organization and who had been their classmate in school and sometimes at university. In the words of two women employees:

> *They weren't all pro-feminist — far from it — but they were more tolerant of women in higher positions ... provided they weren't as high as theirs.*

> *The climate was so generous and euphoric that women weren't even a threat. The idea was "Women? Why not!" But you have to realize that they would have hired a monkey with a university degree, if the* Public Service Employment Act *had allowed it.*

The Commission was so avid for young graduates to take over from the old guard and to manage the new programs, that it sent recruiters all over Canada and the U.S. to snatch up young talent as it came out of the universities. The high-potential men and women became trainees in administration under the Career Assignment Program (1967) designed to groom the future elite of the bureaucracy.

This program is important because for the first time in the history of the public service, the words "woman" and "senior manager" were officially associated. "There must be a planned approach to executive development for the men and women who solve the problems created by our advancing technology..." we read for the first time in an Annual Report (1967).[9]

So strong was the need for university-educated women in certain sectors that, in 1967, the Commission launched a special program for qualified married women who were willing to work part-time "to help overcome the continuing shortage of economists, statisticians and librarians..."[10]

In addition to benefiting from the expansion of the organization, women also had job possibilities through the bilingualization of the public service, which was a priority during the 1960s. For example, many were hired at officer levels in divisions responsible for the teaching of French, translation, and related functions. In 1967, they made up 38.8% of all French and English teaching staff. In this way, women gradually infiltrated the middle echelons of a hierarchy from which they had been totally absent one decade earlier.

Few women, by contrast, penetrated the upper levels of the public service. Women moved up in various departments, such as National Archives, where 2.7% of the women earned more than $10,000 in 1967. In the more powerful Treasury Board, 2.4% of the women earned more than $10,000, and in the Department of Health and Welfare, the figure was 2.8%. Three women finally made it across the hitherto unviolated border to become senior managers.[11] In 1957 only one woman had earned more than $10,000, compared to 296 men; in 1968 this ratio rose to one woman for every 100 men (144 women compared with 13,051 men).

However, a more thorough statistical analysis reveals that most women who managed to enter the management and professional ranks of the service did so in the traditionally female fields of education and health. In 1967, the 17.7% of all female employees who were not support staff could be broken down as follows: 5.2% worked in hospitals; 1.5% were professionals, half of whom worked in traditionally female roles such as home economist, dietician, social worker, librarian, or French teacher; and the remaining 11% worked in what may be called administration (management, service and maintenance, customs).[12]

But again, these overly general statistics fail to reflect the reality of women who, though classified under Administration, were clustered in the lower levels. In fact, 93% of the women in personnel management and 96% of the women in administrative services were at junior levels (compared with 70% and 68% of the men, respectively). As one woman remarked,

> *We weren't at the junior level because we lacked experience or education, it was simply because these were the levels offered to us, while our male classmates were immediately taken on at a middle or upper management level.*

One man who left the public service explained that women were automatically placed in a subordinate group:

> *As an economic statistician, I sat on many recruiting panels at a time when graduates in these fields were being hired. The men went directly into the* Economics, Sociology and Statistics *(ES) group, one of the most prestigious and well-paid professional groups. But I saw many outstanding women, including one with a Ph.D. in mathematics, who were automatically classified in the* Social Science Support *(SI) group, whose role was to serve the ES group. Later, I had to listen to the incredible hypocrites shaking their heads and saying how they would like to have more women in the ES group but couldn't find any qualified ones. And the most incredible thing was that most of the women who were treated this way just kept quiet. The Ph.D. in mathematics was grateful to have a job. I was the one who was the most upset about it, and I'm a man.*

The official statistics indicating the percentage of women in management do not reveal that many of the women who penetrated the higher echelons were atypical, as described in a radical study (1973) which was immediately shelved.[13] Among female managers (defined as those with salaries above $15,000), 61% were single, 86% had no dependants, and 92.4% were more than 40 years old.

In other words, female senior managers did not represent Canadian women in general, seeming to validate the comment heard time and time again from men of the former generation: "A **real** woman can't be a senior official." In fact, in the 1960s, the career advancement of married women with children was being hampered by the same reticence that married women in the 1950s had

experienced at the support level. Most mandarins still insisted on the difficulty of juggling a family and a managerial career, yet no one balked at the idea of a married secretary with children working ten hours a day for a deputy minister. A long debate on married women in the public service followed.[14]

> *It was as though men had said to us: all right, we're willing to accept some of you at the top, but you have to be ready to work and act just like us ... and we don't want any married women or mothers.*

Although the structure, mandate, and composition of the federal public service had shown dramatic and rapid change, attitudes toward women were evolving very slowly.

The veterans factor

Between 1945 and 1962, the Veterans' Affairs Department hired 30,665 veterans; the Post Office hired 28,965; National Defence, 27,449; National Revenue (Tax Appeal Board, Customs and Excise, Taxation), 9,543; and Transport, 6,295.

The presence of veterans in large numbers and in positions of power created a military subculture which was still evident in the 1960s. According to interviewees, it created a working environment which was paternalistic, markedly hierarchical, and, while seemingly benign, unsympathetic to women's career advancement. This may have been a factor in the lack of opportunity women experienced in the five megadepartments which employed more than 60% of the men and nearly half the women in the entire service at that time. Table 3 shows that an average of almost 95% of women working for these departments were at the lowest salary level, whereas only 89% of women were at this level in the rest of the public service.

Table 3. Percentage of female and male work force in largest departments by salary scale, 1967

	Over $10,000		*$6,000 to $10,000*		*Less than $6,000*	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Post Office	0.5	0	9.0	3.1	90.5	96.8
National Defence	3.8	0.04	25.9	2.2	70.2	97.8
Transport	15.2	0.3	38.8	3.9	45.9	95.7
Veterans' Affairs	6.3	0.2	18.8	7.2	74.7	92.4
National Revenue	10.9	0.2	61.9	8.8	27.2	91.0
Average at lowest salary level					61.7	94.7

Source: Calculations based on data from Kathleen Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service* (Ottawa: Public Service Commission, 1970), Table A-5, pp. 156-161.

A woman recalled being one of the very few women with a university education hired by the Post Office:

> *I arrived in an office full of veterans who used a vocabulary I didn't understand. Some of them were nice to me, but only because for them I was a slightly troublesome* little girl *who could be forgiven for getting into some mischief.*

I had a Ph.D. in literature and yet was never allowed to write the press releases that my section produced. I was not even allowed to correct the spelling mistakes they sometimes contained. For two years they had me doing clerical work: I put ink in the machines, I took the blues down to the print shop in the basement ... and I would still be doing it if it weren't for the arrival of a certain type of men who changed the way things were done.

The paternalistic and hierarchical style associated with the military was almost as strong in the central agencies (namely Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission) which, towards the end of the decade, were mandated to administer the first equal opportunity programs for women. More than one interviewee evoked the military subculture when describing the working environment in certain divisions of these agencies, where a number of directors general were indeed former military generals. Two former employees recount their experiences of infantilization:

When I arrived in 1967, for the first time in my life I felt very small. All the men were tall and spoke loudly. Everyone, even the women, seemed to have a loud voice and everyone stood very straight.

Of course I was young at the time, but I felt even younger, like a little girl. In fact, that's what my boss called me.

Old attitudes die hard

Despite the increasing presence of women in the workplace and the first tentative stirrings of feminist consciousness, women lived and worked in an environment which resisted change. According to a woman who was once in charge of an equal opportunity program:

Some of them (not all) were incapable of imagining what discrimination is. If you remember the laughter that greeted women's first demands for universal suffrage, you'll have some idea of how the first government directives on women were met.

Another woman complained about

... the refusal to recognize sexual advances as an offence, under the pretence that a man is a man.

Here is a graphic example:

I remember going to see the deputy minister with a young secretary who had been attacked. This was not harmless flirting: her dress had been torn off. The aggressor was spoken to behind closed doors and went back to work the next day under the approving glances of some of his colleagues, who found the episode rather amusing. After that, I was known as a troublemaker.

Many of the interviewees, both men and women, recalled the unbridled ribaldry of certain office Christmas parties. According to one female observer:

> *It was like a drunken party in an officers' mess. The next morning we would pick up the men who had passed out on the floor, and the day after they would come back to work sheep-faced and not say a word to us. Life in Ottawa resumed its course: women with women, men with men, living apart and never having a meal together; a strangely asexual existence (except when it exploded) which I have never experienced anywhere except in Ottawa.*

The aging of the public service

As shown in Table 4, by 1968, the majority of men in the public service were over 40 years old. The door was opening to young men, but at the end of the 1960s they were still vastly outnumbered. The older male bureaucrats were not necessarily staunchly traditional; nor were the younger ones all pro-feminists.[15] The consensus among those interviewed was that most of the mature decision-makers of the 1960s had, as models of women, their wives or their devoted secretaries (which is, according to one former secretary, the same thing). One retired woman added that the great majority of managers did not understand the concept of women's equality in the workplace.

Table 4. Permanent employees by age and by gender, 1968

	Under 30 %	30 to 39 %	40 to 49 %	Over 50 %
Men	16.9	19.6	30.2	33.3
Women	33.8	14.6	24.0	27.6

Source: Based on the *Annual Report 1968*, Canada, Public Service Commission (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1969).

No one can really blame them for that, since few sociologists had foreseen the massive influx of women into the labour force, and those who had had grossly underestimated its scope. Consequently, when at the end of the decade the Commission wanted more women in management, some of the bureaucrats were aghast. Two former employees described their reaction:

> *They interpreted the first demands as being personal accusations that they did not like women and did not treat them fairly. They rationalized by saying that if women were not represented in management, it was because they did not want to be there and they [the bureaucrats] had only respected their wish. They gave many examples of women who, according to them, had vehemently refused a promotion.*
>
> *When they had to actually give names and choose candidates for high positions, they panicked. They just didn't know who to choose. So they used their own subjective categories. Just as there were marriageable and unmarriageable women, there were women who could be promoted because they were like submissive wives, and those who could not be promoted because they were hostile or difficult.*

Some of these "unpromotable" women tell their side of it:

Our deputy minister was the most charming man in the world and treated us the way he treated his wife and his colleagues' wives: with gentle courtesy, as though we were fragile objects, and also with a bit of apprehension lest we make a scene. On more than one occasion he asked the only female manager in his group to prepare the meals when he met with his colleagues, or else to take the towels from his private washroom home and wash them because they weren't white enough for him. He adored her. She was the only woman he ever helped with her career.

Many of them were paralysed with fear in the presence of a professional woman who was educated and intelligent. Their upbringing had prepared them for everything except that. Some of them would avoid her like the plague, others couldn't rest until they had humiliated her in public.

Sometimes they appointed women for their social skills, because that's what they thought a woman needed in the working world. Actually there were very few of these appointments, but in a town like Ottawa, they stood out like sore thumbs and the rest of the female work force paid the price for years.

In all fairness, it must be added that women themselves also seemed firmly attached to the old values. In 1968, Stanislaw Judek published the results of his study on women in the public service, showing that most women did not wish to have other women as bosses.[16] Also of note is that men seemed to be more aware of discrimination than women. "Twelve per cent of the women and 30 per cent of the men said discrimination was the most important reason why so few women reached senior levels in the public service."[17] Even more surprising are the comments of most of the women who joined the public service at that time, when the great expansion was attracting quite a few young women with degrees:

When I passed the test and entered the Foreign Service, I was convinced that discrimination was pure invention on the part of frustrated women. No one ever questioned my appointment. No one ever said "It's because she's a woman." They looked at me with surprise because we were so few women, but I was accepted without any problem.

There were so few of us women in my section that we were not a threat. So we were accepted. I was appointed section head in 1969 and never had any difficulty except with one male employee who came and told me to my face that he could not work for a woman. He left. But with the others, I never had any problems ... at least, not half the suspicion and rivalry I'm experiencing now as a woman.

There's never any danger in being an exception. They look at you with curiosity, they talk to you. It's when there are too many exceptions that the problems start. Back then, we were so few that we were rather ... exotic.

With acceptance and youth on their side and motherhood still far in the future, many women say that, at the time, not only did they not perceive any discrimination around them but, like some men, they thought that women (other women, of course) were only getting what they deserved. Yet, as many of these women later discovered, stereotypes were still so powerful that their growing numbers in the public service would not ensure workplace equality.

Although a small handful of women in Canada were becoming militant, it would take more to achieve significant change. The "more", that extra shove, came when the government, in response to public pressure, asked Senator Florence Bird to set up a Royal Commission. Its mandate was "to inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal Government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society."[18]

Three years later, when Senator Bird tabled her report in the House of Commons, it contained 167 recommendations, 14 of which dealt with the female work force governed by the *Public Service Employment Act*. These 14 resolutions were not like the others: they had a symbolic value in that they put the onus on the government to prove it was serious as an employer. Women in the public service were no longer mere workers; they had become a political issue.

Notes

1. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1961* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1962), p. 25.
2. Canada, Royal Commission on Government Organization, *Report* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962).
3. Kathleen Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service* (Ottawa: Public Service Commission, 1970), p. 18.
4. According to the 1961 census, 42% of Canadians were under 20 years old and 34% were under 15 years old.
5. At the end of the decade, women accounted for 57.4% of all diplomas and certificates, 38.8% of college and post-secondary diplomas, 28.5% of university degrees, 21.5% of Master's degrees, and 9.3% of Ph.Ds. [Source: Canada, Statistics Canada, *Education in Canada: A Statistical Review for the Period 1960-1961 to 1970-71* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), Table 67.]
6. "In 1964, Canada ratified the 1958 Discrimination (Employment and Occupational) Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This instrument, which explicitly mentioned discrimination on the basis of sex, committed Canada to the pursuit of a 'national policy designed to promote ... equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof. The terms employment and occupation in this Convention include access to vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment'." In Kathleen Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 18.
7. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1960* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1961) and *Annual Report 1969* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1970).
8. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Reports*, 1962 to 1969.
9. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1967* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1968), p. 12.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
11. Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 28.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Denise Moncion, "L'accession des femmes aux postes de cadres dans la fonction publique", unpublished study, Ottawa, Treasury Board, 1973.
14. At that time, restrictions against married women were enshrined in the laws governing employment in the public service. For example, according to Section 7 of the *Financial Administration Act*, a married woman assigned to a remote posting was not entitled to a married person's allowance or federally-owned housing unless she could prove that her husband was a dependant. A married man under the same circumstances was entitled to the married person's allowance regardless of whether his wife was employed or not.
15. Many observers say that, although it is true that a small group of men from the old guard were the source of the mockery that greeted the equal opportunity programs of the 1970s, the few advances that women did make at that time were largely due to the open-mindedness of another small group of mandarins who were just as old.
16. Stanislaw Judek, *Women in the Public Service: Their Utilization and Employment* (Ottawa: Department of Labour, 1968).
17. Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service*, p. 103.
18. Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), p. vii.

Tolerance (the early 1970s)

But there is no women's problem. There never has been. That's all imagination. Personally, madam, if I see a competent woman, I hire her.

Male senior manager, 59

It was certainly not the first time the government had felt obliged to prove its spirit of social justice by cleaning up its own house. As we have seen, the government's gratitude towards the veterans can be measured by the number of them hired after the two world wars. As for the sincerity of its desire to acknowledge French-speaking Canadians, this can be measured by the percentage of francophones in the public service, especially at the top levels.[1]

In the 1970s, at the time, much was heard about representative bureaucracy and the importance of bureaucracy as an agent of social reform.[2] But female representation in the public service did not have nearly as much political clout as the integration of veterans or French-speaking Canadians. Why not?

First, women had rarely united as a group around a common action. Unlike the veterans, they had not fought a war together (one of the most powerful tribal bonds in the world). In addition, women did not necessarily identify themselves primarily by gender but also by religion, language, age, and so on. Also, the women who were in favour of equal opportunity in the public service were not only in the minority, they sometimes encountered outright hostility from the women they were trying to help. A former equal opportunity administrator described it in these terms:

> *At first I sometimes encountered more resistance from women than from men. In fact, sometimes the women who were moving up the ladder were especially hostile towards women.*

Certain ministers and deputy ministers were perfectly aware of the lack of agreement among women and used it to their advantage. Many of the male interviewees made remarks to the effect that:

> *Women can't even get along together, so why should we do anything for them?*

The second reason for women's lesser political clout was the well-known fact that women did not vote according to gender or political lines. More than men, the women tended to vote for the government in power.

And finally, most of the politicians were men, many of whose private and public lives were not exactly overflowing with egalitarian feelings towards the other gender, even if they did pay tribute to women in many other ways. In the powerful Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office, female representation and influence were negligible during the 1970s.[3]

A group lacking in unity, a problem that could not be expressed in a vote, the bureaucratic status quo, and politicians who seemed indifferent at best: all these factors could not help but lead to a half-hearted government policy, which was not to be strengthened by giving it any sort of legal teeth. As one observer put it:

> *No voting problem, no political problem. Apart from the old method used by Lysistrata, I don't see what weapons women could have used: they were unable to raise the spectre of either separatism or masses of unemployed veterans.*

The Veterans' Preference Clause had been included in the *Public Service Employment Act* of 1918. The legal status of both official languages in the public service was recognized in the *Official Languages Act* of 1969. Certainly the *Public Service Employment Act* prohibited discrimination by gender, but this was not a program. It was not until 1972 that the government put out a declaration of intent called a directive.

A directive without direction

In April 1972, the federal Cabinet sent all deputy ministers a directive (Directive 44) asking them to take measures to promote the advancement of women to middle and upper positions.[4] That the directive was merely a motherhood statement was painfully obvious: the law had not been changed and no directive for compliance had been set forth. It was inevitable that the public service would continue blithely on its way.

In issuing such a directive, the Cabinet was not taking into account the inertia that reigns in bureaucracies and large organizations. Radical or important changes rarely spring from within such organizations because they go against the territorial interests of those who are supposed to apply them.[5] The Cabinet was also ignoring the thousand and one techniques that an organization as legally complicated as the federal bureaucracy can use to resist change. It was ignoring the informal organization, or "old boys' club", which is of immense strategic importance. It underestimated the fact that the past weighs heavily on organizations by keeping "masters" and "slaves" in their respective roles (a process admirably described by Rosabeth Moss Kanter[6]). When faced with opposition, women tend to lower their aspirations while men tend to reinforce theirs.[7]

In other words, it was as though the government had knocked at the door of a private club and said: "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce these charming ladies. Part of my electorate (especially the female part) thinks that you've been wrong not to allow them into your club and I hope you'll do your best to set things right. So please share your power, your salaries, your jobs, and your territories with them. And now I really must run, I've a million things to do."

The outcome should not surprise anyone, for it was predictably human: islands of enthusiasm adrift in a sea of indifference, inertia, and resistance. And it provides a remarkable demonstration of the grip of bureaucratic culture and ideology.

Instances of change

Although it is true, as we shall see, that the bureaucracy as a whole resisted new ideas, it would be simplistic to believe that it did so as a unified block. Like Canadian society, it comprised "conservatives" and "reformers". And in 1972, economic and demographic expansion allowed some adventure and experimentation. One can see this merely by reading the annual reports of the Public Service Commission for 1972, 1973, and 1974, in which a willingness to open the doors of the public service, especially to women, is evident.

In 1972, the Commission announced the creation of an "accountability centre" for women, which would report directly to the Commission. It immediately expanded the training programs offered to administrative support employees wishing to pursue careers. Then it allowed experience in volunteer work to be recognized as professional experience, while eliminating the references "For men only" and "For women only" which still appeared on the competition posters. It promised that the issues of part-time work and child-care centres would receive particular attention from both the Commission and the Treasury Board.

Efforts were made to recruit more female administration students for training. The results were encouraging: by 1974, women constituted one-third of all public administration trainees. These numbers, combined with the sincere efforts of a few deputy ministers and directors, produced what the Commission called "resounding" progress — a slight exaggeration perhaps. In 1974, there were 33 women at the Senior Management level and equivalent.[8]

Much more significant was the fact that, between 1970 and 1976, women experienced a growth rate which from then on would remain significantly higher than that of men. It was 68.3%, double the growth rate for male employees (32.4%).[9] In other words, of the 84,459 permanent positions created in the public service at that time, nearly half (38,152) went to women. Also significant is the fact that this growth occurred mostly at levels which were still quite low but which were no longer support positions. In 1972, 84.1% of the female work force was still in the non-officer occupational categories. By 1976, this percentage had been reduced to 79.4%. In the Administration and Foreign Service category, only 6.5% of the population was female in 1972; by 1976, this percentage had increased to 11.2%.[10]

However, not everyone shared this initial enthusiasm, if only because all organizations have some resistance to change. This resistance was especially true in the case of the federal service because it had reached a saturation level, having been continually shaken up since approximately 1965: Cabinet shuffles, shuffles of high-level bureaucrats, reclassification, innumerable reorganizations, sporadic growth, bilingualization, and so on.

As might be expected, some of the changes were welcomed with open arms while others stirred up many latent conflicts, created insecurities, and frustrated many ambitions. The arrival of a new directive favouring women (1972) on top of all these changes meant not only extra effort but a change in attitude that went much deeper than the reorganization of a deputy minister's office. The truth of the matter was that some of the men in power were being asked to redefine their values. The change was a radical one, and it met with proportionate resistance.

Resistance to change

The resistance was not uniform: it had its high spots and its subcurrents. It was not entirely male. It had as many faces as there were resisting deputy ministers, directors general, department heads, and managers. It seemed to some of those interviewed that each obstacle they set up was more ingenious than the next.

• *Stonewalling*

Probably one of the most common tactics was stonewalling. This tactic may be effective but is not very subtle: in fact, the media have often satirized governments and bureaucracies for setting up all sorts of committees simply to stall for time when no one wants to take action. A good example is the intention expressed by the Public Service Commission and the Treasury Board in 1972 to "reflect" on the issues of child-care centres and part-time work.[11] By early 1988, after many committees, meetings and proposals, this intention has still not yielded any concrete action except for a few pilot projects, a child-care centre on Parliament Hill, and some tax changes for part-time workers.

• *Indifference and negation*

Other techniques were also used, whether consciously or unconsciously. Women's issues were trivialized in comparison with other more "urgent" problems. One former deputy minister acknowledged that during the first half of the 1970s, his sole preoccupation was with "francophones" — which meant "male francophones". Others maintained that the women's issue was and still is minor compared with other bureaucratic problems. And, according to one observer, there was a lot of buck-passing:

> *My deputy minister and colleagues never spent more than one minute on the [1972] directive during planning sessions. There were no statistics, no women were present, and they finished the discussion by saying "This isn't our problem, we're a technical department."*

Men who thought they knew what women wanted did not hesitate to speak on their behalf. One woman was told by an assistant deputy minister,

> *Women don't really want to become managers. They think they do, but I know that as soon as they reach the age of 30, they want children.*

Some simply hurried through their obligation. Remarked one observer,

> *After appointing a woman to an upper-management position, they thought they had done their duty and that they didn't owe anything more to society.*

Some resorted to stereotypes that homogenized women along the lines expressed by one manager:

> *Five years ago I gave one woman a chance. She was an idiot. I don't want any more women.*

In most provinces, the directive was simply tossed aside. According to one observer, the deputy ministers there perceived it as "a problem that belonged to Ottawa and that did not concern them in the least."

Some deputy ministers vehemently rejected the directive in other ways. "It's against the will of God," one of them exclaimed during a meeting on equal opportunity. Another stated openly,

> *As long as I'm around, no woman will set foot in the management category of my department.*

And finally, some got around the problem by being pro-feminist — provided, as one woman put it, that "they could play Pygmalion".

> *The day I accepted a position in a department that my deputy minister disapproved of, not only did I never hear from him again, but he refused to help me when I encountered problems.*
>
> *My deputy minister was so sure of his open-mindedness towards women, that he tolerated only those who adored him for his generosity. His equation was simple: "I'm a feminist, therefore women adore me. The rest aren't real women or real feminists but only crazy reactionaries."*

• *Technical barriers*

The most formidable resistance to change developed at slightly lower levels of the hierarchy: at the levels where women could become serious competitors. In many cases, this resistance consisted of not doing anything, in allowing the informal organization to follow its course of manipulation, neutralization, and intimidation.

• *Manipulation of staffing processes*

Staffing processes are complex, unpredictable, and beyond the comprehension of most politicians, journalists, and common mortals. They are a nightmare to the statisticians in the public service, who must work around changes in definitions, categories, and jurisdictions.

The purpose of so much complexity is to select, appoint, and promote employees — both male and female — on the basis of merit. However, were such a system applied to the letter, it could not survive; hence the development of a parallel system which the sociologists have christened "informal organization". This gives the system room to breathe, to reproduce its culture, and especially to give the manager some latitude in the choice of candidates. It does this by eliminating the others through a series of technical barriers, which, in fact, are perfectly legal and compatible with the merit principle. In most cases this kind of manipulation does not work against merit but merely renders a rigid system more workable and more human.

The absence of opinion polls and field studies, a result of the law of silence in the public service, makes direct knowledge of this system difficult. Nevertheless, from 1976 on, the first computer data compatible with current data made it possible to reconstitute some of the barriers set up by this informal organization.

The first barrier was the obvious unwillingness of many managers to open the doors of the public service to women. Proportionally, more women entered through the back door of temporary appointments. There are two ways of entering the public service: permanent appointments and temporary appointments. In the first case, a candidate who passes the test is offered a so-called "indeterminate" position, meaning for an indeterminate length of time, i.e., a permanent position. In the second case, the job is offered with no examination but for a specified length of time which may range from two weeks to five years.

Temporary appointments are often used by managers to hire a candidate immediately so that he or she will later be able to participate in closed competitions.[12] It can also be used to screen employees at no risk to the employer. Obviously, this technique has the disadvantage of prolonging the uncertainty and the probation period (usually one year) during which the employee may be

dismissed. In 1976, women made up about one-third of the employees appointed for an indeterminate period and 48% of those appointed for a specific period.[13] In all groups, both management and non-management, more women than men were forced to pass through what some described as the "purgatory" of temporary appointments.

The second hurdle was to aggravate women's sense of inferiority by not offering them management positions. Despite the fact that the public service continued to grow during the first half of the 1970s, almost all the appointments and promotions were awarded to men. A colleague of a former deputy minister said, "Never had so many men shared such a big cheese."

This is confirmed in Table 5, which clearly shows that, in 1976, the upper levels of the male hierarchy (the Management category according to the 1987 definition) contained 4,140 men and only 89 women. This imbalance seems strange when one considers that the new female arrivals in the service were university graduates and were supposed to be sought after by deputy ministers who were desperate to promote women.

Table 5. Permanent* employees by gender** and by level, 1976***

	Men	Women
Management category		
EX 4-5	186	3
EX 1-3	1,700	39
SM	2,254	47
Management sub-total	**4,140**	**89**
Other categories		
Senior managers	4,165	300
Middle managers	24,401	2,237
Officers	71,884	28,053
Support staff	17,482	32,407
TOTAL	**122,072**	**63,086**

Source: Public Service Commission, unpublished data.

Notes: *The Post Office Department has been excluded for purposes of comparison with later years.
**Excluding nurses.
***The EX and SM levels did not exist in 1976; they have been reconstituted for purposes of comparison with later years. Unknown data excluded.

One possible explanation for the gender discrepancy among managers might be the difficulty of finding enough capable women with university degrees. However, this is unlikely because, in 1976, women made up 38% of all university graduates in Canada.

The next explanation that comes to mind is that female graduates did not apply to the public service, which is also false; 29% of all applications received through campus recruiting were from women.[14] Moreover, a sampling of female managers in the public service shows that they were extremely well educated: out of 119 women there were 22 Ph.D.s, 36 MAs, 27 Honours BAs, and 17 BAs.[15]

Yet another possible explanation is that women did not have the type of degree or experience required for the higher levels, to which a woman who was once assistant deputy minister scoffed, "Nonsense! Most of them didn't want us, that's all there is to it." Many interviewees concurred with this opinion. Said one male staffing officer:

> *Although sexual preferences [sic] were no longer allowed on competition posters, the candidate still could not hide his or her sexual identity during the interview. In fact, the managers didn't even have to go that far: they just looked at the person's given name and decided. The female candidate was eliminated under all sorts of pretexts.*

Two female employees corroborated this view:

> *They could play the rules to suit their purpose. Some would write the job description and qualifications especially so that a particular candidate, the one chosen in advance, would win the competition. Women were the losers in that game and had no recourse. They weren't pre-selected by the networks.*
>
> *All they had to do was find all sorts of faults in the candidate they didn't want. It was child's play, and still is.*

One reason often invoked was the lack of management experience. This argument was particularly disheartening for most of the women interviewed, who denounced the vicious circle in which they were and still are caught up.

> *If I can't be a manager because I lack management experience, where will I get my experience?*

In addition, some interviewees pointed out the hypocrisy behind this argument: during the 1970s, some young men without any experience, not even a summer job, were hired at high management levels. In 1976, 13 men under 30 years of age were hired directly at the top management ranks.[16]

Perhaps most importantly, in the grading of the applications, old prejudices obscured the judgement of the raters, no matter how open-minded or well trained in scientific evaluation methods. Kathleen Archibald, in an experiment conducted for her book on women in the public service, has demonstrated this very clearly. She asked raters to grade five candidates for executive positions. The résumés were drafted so that two candidates, A and B, had a good chance of being ranked first and second respectively. C, D, and E were always shown as male. Half of the raters received résumés in which Candidate A was female and Candidate B was male, while the other half received résumés in which A was male and B was female. It was found that: "... when Male A competed against Female B, he was at the top of the eligibility list 86 per cent of the time, but when Female A competed against Male B, she was at the top only 58 per cent of the time. Or looking at it the other way, Male B had a 42 per cent chance of coming out in first place or tying for top rank when in competition with Female A, while Female B had only a 14 per cent chance in competition with Male A."[17]

Other manifestations of prejudice were cruder. Several male and female observers have reported on meetings in which candidates were pre-selected from files containing photographs:

It was so crude it made me ashamed to be a man. The remarks about the women's photos were worthy of the filthiest tavern.

The third obstacle to women's advancement in the public service can best be described by the metaphor of a horse race: all the candidates were equal at the starting gate, but some had greater hurdles to clear. The same complicated game of unconscious prejudice and unofficial discrimination went on within the system. Internal competitions and job reclassification enabled some to scale quickly to the top while others stagnated.

In some cases, this consisted of promoting female candidates to "acting positions" and leaving them there for several years.

My director was an acting director for two years, then she was appointed to another acting position. Not that they were trying to get rid of her: on the contrary, she was excellent and very much in demand. Every time there was a problem in a division, they sent her there and she solved it. Then they ran a competition, appointed some other guy from the department, and sent her to clean up another mess made by some incompetent.

On other occasions, the competition would simply be cancelled.

I had won a competition for a promotion, they came and told me I was too qualified and that the competition had been cancelled. If I had been a man, I would have raised a fuss; but I'm a woman and a woman keeps quiet.

In most cases, women were left at the same level. We have no data for the beginning of the 1970s, but the first reliable data as shown in Table 6 leave no doubt that women stayed at the same level longer than men. Here again, other factors such as pregnancy or lack of education may be offered as an explanation. According to one man,

When the time for a promotion came, the women were nowhere to be found. And when you offered it to them, most of them panicked, especially the best ones. I spent my time reassuring them, not discriminating against them.

Some women confirmed this claim whereas others gave a different slant to the story:

It's partly true: when I offered promotions to some women, they always hesitated for a moment. But when I offered promotions to men, not only did they all accept but they seemed to think it was high time.

They're talking about exceptions, because most of the time, we didn't even have the luxury of hesitating over a promotion: nobody offered it to us!

*Table 6. Proportion of men and women remaining at the same level for at least four years, by group, 1978 or 1979**

	Men	Women
ES	70.7	87.3
FI	83.6	96.8
PE	79.2	93.7
PM	62.4	75.0
AS	71.5	83.7

Source: Reconstituted from data in Table 3.9 in Nicole Morgan with the collaboration of Charles Moubarak, *Nowhere To Go? Possible Consequences of the Demographic Imbalance in Decision-Making Groups of the Federal Public Service* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981).

Note: *For some groups, 1978 data was not available. In these instances, 1979 data was used.

Legend: ES = Economics, Sociology and Statistics
FI = Financial administration
PE = Personnel administration
PM = Program administration (level 5 and higher)
AS = Administrative services (level 5 and higher)

The fourth hurdle was training and development. At a time when university degrees were particularly in demand, professional development was regarded as a sure-fire way to an exciting career. However, Table 7 shows that the distribution of professional development and training was clearly discriminatory.

Table 7. Participation in public service training and development programs, 1972

	Participation by gender	
	Men	Women
% of total public service work force	34.0	18.8
% of participants in each category		
Scientific and Professional	96.6	22.2
Administrative and Foreign Service	50.0	11.7
Technical	38.0	11.7
Administrative Support	34.0	16.8
Operational	9.0	4.2
Executive	27.3	0.0

Source: Denise Moncion, "L'accession des femmes aux postes de cadres dans la fonction publique", unpublished study, Ottawa, Treasury Board, 1973.

These disconcerting results have often been interpreted, without any further research, as proof of women's lack of motivation. But according to the same study (Table 7), 41.2% of the female managers in the survey had taken courses towards a university degree, while 50 out of 119 (42%) had taken other courses (administration, finance, French, and so on) outside the public service. The author of the study pointed out that because the participants paid for all or part of these courses, their motivation was evident.[18]

• *Neutralization*

To this structured discrimination must be added another type of discrimination, more difficult to grasp in that it did not involve such easily measurable issues as salary or job level but rather job content. The interviewees had much to say about this second type of discrimination.

One technique consisted of appointing women to a department, group, or division without any real power to act on priorities. This tended to perpetuate the role women had occupied in the twentieth century economy in the support and nurturing professions. In 1976, women continued to occupy a large proportion of the jobs in education (49.6%), nursing (96.6%), support for social sciences (46.7%), support for education (77.1%), and translation (50.6%).[19] Another technique was to offer women jobs which, although equal in salary and rank, were of little interest to men. This category can be divided into several types:

Tedious jobs were jobs that were disagreeable or that required enormous amounts of work at a thankless task such as the writing of annual reports. Said one interviewee,

> *In a certain prestigious department, the first management job ever offered to a woman was that of complaint administration, a job that none of the men wanted.*

Booby-trap jobs had an element of danger because they were in divisions whose existence was threatened or because they reported to a particularly impossible boss. One woman recalled,

> *The president of the board that had approved my promotion to the department head remarked to me with a big smile, "You're going to fall on your ass." He was right...*

Rearranged jobs were those in which the tasks were altered little by little. Here is one account:

> *I landed in a management job and a few weeks later, they took away all the management part. I found out from a secretary in the washroom.*

Vacuum jobs were those from which the power had been previously removed (a variation on rearranged jobs), or that had been created especially for a female candidate. Alternatively, when the job description was vague, things were arranged so that the job would not have too much power. Two women appointed to high-ranking positions said,

> *They had me shuffling papers for years.*
>
> *Normally, an Executive Assistant is a senior manager who participates in meetings. When I was appointed Executive Assistant to a deputy minister, I found myself with a male assistant who had all the power. I was really just a glorified secretary. The day a Cabinet minister visited us, it was my assistant who met him while I was assigned to go and ask the administration whether more toilets could be installed on another floor of the building.*

This was confirmed by a man who was for many years Executive Assistant to a deputy minister.

When I held that position, I was a senior manager and was part of the decision-making process. I was consulted by the directors general in the Department. When I left, I was replaced by a woman because it looked good, but right from the beginning she was only a super-secretary. And I've seen the same thing happen in other cases.

Trash-can jobs allowed other directors to get rid of the employees they did not want. Two female employees said:

They sent me the worst secretary in the section, as well as a sick old man who had given up a long time ago and who napped every afternoon in his office; there was also a former alcoholic and a pregnant woman who had just been hired.

When they promoted me to director, I was overjoyed, but when they introduced me to my team, I nearly fainted. In a week the employees of the division had been reorganized and the ones in my group were known to be the most impossible. I couldn't handle it.

Sabotage jobs consisted in promoting the least capable woman.

I saw them do it once. The guys were ecstatic because they had hoisted the feminists by their own petard. The women of course were happy that a woman had been promoted, but what a disaster! She was so incapable that even the most open-minded men and women became forever anti-affirmative action.

• *Intimidation*

The techniques used to intimidate people have changed little over the centuries. They are used every day in every organization, among men, among women, and of course by men on women and vice versa. In fact, many of the men interviewed said they had been victimized in their careers by particularly intimidating women at all levels.

In the 1970s, the interactions between men and women became more overtly hostile. In the words of one woman, "Towards the middle of the decade, they brought out the heavy artillery." This was confirmed by several interviewees of both sexes. A woman who had worked for the public service in both the early days and modern times sums it up in these terms:

The men in the 1950s and even '60s didn't use much intimidation on women, because we weren't a threat. It happened, of course ... there are brutes everywhere. But it wasn't the general rule. They did use intimidation constantly among themselves, having shouting matches and banging on their desks. Everything changed when women became a threat, or rather were perceived as such. All of a sudden the men's behaviour changed from total scorn to the most brutal threats.

Here is another woman's experience:

I was an executive secretary and a particularly well respected one. I never felt any discrimination and every Christmas my boss invited me to his home for dinner. His wife would give me a Christmas gift. Then I went back to school, got a Master's degree, and

returned to my old division as a researcher. I had a cold welcome, and now, fifteen years later, I haven't even been invited to lunch. Not only have I not been treated as an equal, but for the first time I was made to feel that I wasn't in my place. For the first time in my working life, I felt scorned and I understood what discrimination was.

This theme was often heard from secretaries or clerks who had gone back to school or had been promoted to the rank of manager. Career advancement was not without its hazards.

The worst were the other women, those who had become my employees after having been my co-workers. It was as though there was suddenly a wall between us.

Before I worked for *managers, now I* was *a manager. Before I was respected, they* [*men*] *were polite to me and my evaluations were excellent. Afterward, they treated me coldly, my evaluations went down. I stopped being* extraordinary *and became just a* good employee. *They stopped inviting me to travel with them.*

I finally understood that equality has nothing to do with rank or salary. Here I was, realizing my life-long ambition: promoted from secretary to junior manager, earning the same salary as my colleagues and ... crying myself to sleep every night.

In our interviews, most of the women, whether they had been promoted or entered directly at an officer level, were able to give reasons for these disastrous results. Some of the men, too, were frank about what happened behind the scenes. In addition to thinly veiled contempt, women experienced ostracism, isolation, punishment, physical intimidation, the formation of cliques, rumours, intellectual intimidation, and sexual harassment.

Ostracism and **isolation** were the lot of many women promoted to desirable jobs.

When I arrived in my new section after winning the promotion through a discrimination suit, almost no one spoke to me for months. I had taken the job of one of the boss's friends.

I was the only director in my group not invited to submit my projects to the assistant deputy minister. All my male colleagues, including my own subordinates, met with him daily to discuss their projects and just to talk.

Sometimes, when no better way could be found, they would use **punishment**:

I got in through the equal opportunity program. Oh, of course they greeted me when I arrived in the morning, but I was systematically asked to redo everything I submitted. I had nothing against that, since I was there to learn. But they asked me to redo the same memo 25, 30 times, and each time one of the clan members would red-pencil it with glee. It got to a point where I didn't dare write anything and I forgot that I knew how to write. This went on for six months. I left with the reputation of an idiot, wounded to the very core.

According to many women, **physical intimidation** was a classic ruse, especially in the megadepartments.

They never sit down when they talk to you. And they never ask you to sit down. They just yell.

I was the only one to witness the ranting and raving of my deputy minister. When I came out of his office nearly in tears, nobody believed me, they said he was so polite. And yet I would see him every day bordering on hysteria.

The **forming of gendered cliques** was such a strong tendency that some people from other countries or other Canadian cities have described it as unique to the federal public service. Most of the interviewees — both men and women — acknowledged that Ottawa is and was cliquish, especially at that time,

... a town where men have lunch with other men and women have lunch with other women.

In any organization, **rumours** play an important if unacknowledged role.[20] They often carry more weight than official performance reviews. Many of the women remarked that it was especially dangerous for a woman to acquire a high profile. They all agreed that women were given no quarter.

The least mistake or wrong move and you were the talk of Ottawa or the region for the next ten years.

Sometimes rumours were used as a watchdog, and an especially fierce one considering how isolated female managers were from other women at that time. One former assistant said he remembered witnessing a discussion on the possible promotion of one of the women in the department:

It was obvious that the deputy minister was in favour of the promotion. Two directors were there that I've often seen drink themselves under the table. They mentioned to the deputy minister that the young woman drank. This was not true. I know the woman and I've never seen her drink *in the sense that was meant. Today she's at the same level she was at ten years ago.*

Actually, alcoholism was not the favourite topic for lunchtime gossip. Many observers reported that the most frequent accusation was that of being ill-natured or difficult. Here are the comments of a woman who was in charge of equal opportunity programs:

How many times did I hear, "Yes, yes, she may be brilliant but she's impossible to work with." When I dug a little deeper, most of the time I found a woman who worked day and night and tried to be fair, meaning that she got rid of incompetent employees or refused to submit false expense accounts.

The rumours were given weight by the practice of keeping "lists". From the beginning of the 1970s, lists of "suitable" women for management positions began to circulate.[21] Officially the lists did not exist (and do not exist today), though several observers have confirmed their existence. But since they were not official, no one knows what criteria were used to define a "high-potential woman". One observer added that in fact there were several lists and that they were sometimes contradictory. Others commented that the pink list was accompanied by a black list of "difficult women".

The importance of these lists stemmed from the fact that competitions for high-ranking jobs were not open like other competitions. One must be invited to apply, and most of the interviewees maintained that "high flyers" were chosen from a list they had never seen.

> *It was a stroke of genius. Even if the lists don't exist, everyone talks about them. It makes us toe the line. We have this perpetual fantasy that someday we'll be recognized.*

Intellectual intimidation made its appearance as women began entering jobs that involved research and policy-writing. The appropriation of ideas was enough of a problem that many interviewees mentioned it several times. And it does not involve only women, since public service regulations require that the supervisor sign all research documents sent to his or her own superiors.

> *The upper echelons are full of people who have been rewarded for ideas they never had.*

> *The dice are loaded in the sense that the supervisor was usually a man, and it was easy for him to intimidate the woman so that he could take all the credit for himself and she wouldn't dare open her mouth.*

Sexual harassment was another tactic; little is known about its extent and manifestation at that time, except its characteristic of respecting the hierarchy. According to one man,

> *The secretaries have advances made on them directly whereas female managers receive compliments that are bordering on gross insults.*

Such behaviour was never brought out into the open, as one former secretary explained:

> *The first thing you learn is never to go and complain to the politicians, the courts, or the media. If you do, of course they can't take any direct measures against you, but they can make your life so miserable that if you have any pride left, you'll leave without being asked.*

In short, the culture of the organization resisted so well that towards the mid-1970s, the political masters could not help but notice. It was obvious that the statistics were not in line with the rhetoric. The near absence of women in the upper echelons looked especially bad in light of the fact that between 1972 and 1975, the number of women in the public service had increased by 30.5% in comparison with only 13.3% for men.[22] Added to this were International Women's Year (1975) and federal elections that were going to be a close race. Women would have to be courted more persuasively. The public service, whether it wanted to or not, would have to do better.

Notes

1. In 1960, the Royal Commission on Government Organization revealed the existence of discrimination against francophones. Nine years later, the Commission of Inquiry on Bilingualism proposed that the merit principle be relaxed so that more francophones could be integrated at all levels.

2. John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

3. In the Privy Council Office in 1976, there were two women at the Management level (as defined in 1987) compared with 29 men. (Source: Public Service Commission, unpublished data).

4. This announcement came shortly after the creation of an Office of Equal Opportunity mandated to promote equal opportunity.

5. See: Doug Hartle, *A Theory of the Expenditure Budgetary Process*, Ontario Economic Council Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 73; Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality", in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp. 249-260; Robert N. Kharasch, *The Institutional Imperative* (New York: Charterhouse Books, 1973).

6. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "The Impact of Organization Structure: Models and Methods for Change", in *Equal Employment Policy for Women: Strategies for Implementation in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe*, ed. Ronnie Steinberg Ratner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

7. See also the work of Lin Buckland, "Education and Training: Equal Opportunities or Barrier to Employment?", in *Research Studies of the Commission on Equity in Employment* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1985), pp. 131-156.

8. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1974* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1975).

9. In 1970, there were 142,840 men and 55,861 women (Canada Post included); in 1976, the respective numbers were 189,147 and 94,013 (Canada Post included). A breakdown by gender and department is not available in the 1970 Annual Report; therefore, Canada Post has been included in both reference years. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1970* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971) and *Annual Report 1976* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1977).

10. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1972* and *Annual Report 1976* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1973 and 1977 respectively).

11. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1972*.

12. These competitions are open only to employees governed by the *Public Service Employment Act*.

13. Carolle Simard, *L'administration contre les femmes: La reproduction des différences sexuelles dans la fonction publique canadienne* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1983), p. 48.

    Prior to 1976, data on temporary employees are sketchy.

    Temporary employees are only the tip of the iceberg. Every year, the federal service employs a considerable number of temporary employees placed by specialized agencies. Although we do not know the exact number of women employed temporarily in 1976, we do know that in 1977, the federal government spent $12 million "in the National Capital Region alone, hiring office support staff from temporary placement agencies." See: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Women in the Public Service: Overlooked and Undervalued* (Ottawa: October 1980), p. 19.

14. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1976*, Table 6, p. 52.

15. Denise Moncion, "L'accession des femmes aux postes de cadres dans la fonction publique", unpublished study, Ottawa, Treasury Board, 1973.

16. The SX level, which corresponds to the EX of 1987.

17. Kathleen Archibald, *Sex and the Public Service* (Ottawa: Public Service Commission, 1970), p. 204.

18. Moncion, "L'accession des femmes aux postes de cadres dans la fonction publique".

19. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1976*, Table 42, pp. 86 and 87.

20. "John Delorean gives examples of both aspects of the rumor mill in his account of his career in General Motors. As he states 'rumors were a way of life' .. He also furnishes some telling examples of times in which rumors about personnel changes intimidated those perceived as 'mavericks' ... management by intimidation was the norm." Quoted by Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), p. 110.

21. The lists seem to have been reserved for women. The rumour mill mentioned there were male "high flyers", but there was no talk of a male list.

22. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1972* and *Annual Report 1975* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1973 and 1977 respectively).

On the Defensive (the late 1970s)

All it takes to be a deputy minister is to be female, black, handicapped, and part Indian.

Male senior officer, 40

In November 1975, Jean Chrétien, President of the Treasury Board, sent a new message to the bureaucracy. He outlined the objectives that the government intended to pursue with respect to equal opportunity: within a reasonable time frame, the representation of men and women should correspond to the proportion of qualified candidates of both sexes. This representation was to be reflected in all departments and at all levels. Starting in January 1976, each department was to submit its annual targets and action plans for approval by the Treasury Board. Advisory bodies were created and invested with the power of inquiry. They reported directly to a minister who was in charge of transmitting the Cabinet's concerns.[1]

When we compare Chrétien's order with the 1972 Directive 44, we see that it is more than a polite suggestion that something be done. First, although no specific date was mentioned, the phrase "time frame" was there, with the word "reasonable" added, implying that the excuse "These things take time" would not be so readily accepted. Second, numerical targets were established and a body was made responsible, which in bureaucratic language signified that battle lines had been drawn and the matter was serious.

But just as serious was the economic situation of the country in general and of the public service in particular. The formidable expansion that had transformed it was drawing to a close. From 1977 to 1978, the public service population was reduced by 1.3%; the following year, by 4.4%.[2]

This abrupt halt in growth had two important consequences: first, it was felt mostly among the male work force, which decreased by 6.2% between 1975 and 1980 while the female work force grew by 7.1%.[3,4] Second, the culture of the organization changed considerably, according to some observers. It was then that the battle for power really started, and the resistance turned into a defensive stance. According to one woman interviewee:

> *After the directive, the tension mounted. The men started to really worry. On the one hand there was the political order, which did not contain the words* affirmative action *but you could see it coming. On the other hand, starting in 1976-1977, the competition became such a race for the best jobs that we were all getting more and more nervous. They couldn't have chosen a worse time to announce that women would now be in the race too, even though I must say that we still didn't really believe it.*

This defensive stance was not simply a reinforcement of the bureaucratic tactics described in the previous chapter. In fact, according to some of the women interviewed, things were somewhat better in that respect. Women were starting to be accepted in positions other than secretarial and more attention was paid to form whenever a female candidate was rejected. Also, some directors general had come to understand that, as one of them put it,

... female junior managers, if well selected, tend to work harder and are more loyal and flexible than men.

Despite or perhaps because of this progress, resistance within the bureaucracy became entrenched.

The first line of defence

The defensive stance, which was sometimes defended ideologically, can be read in black and white in the annual reports of the Public Service Commission during the second half of the 1970s. Year after year, they presented a barrage of arguments which, without calling into question the political order to make room for women, downplayed it considerably.

First argument: "We will not set quotas."[5]

Although the word "quotas" was never mentioned in government directives, weapons were drawn just in case. In its 1976 Annual Report, the Public Service Commission was "of the view that this approach would be undesirable and impractical; and that it would conflict with the merit principle and pose unanswerable questions."[6]

Second argument: "We are not the ones who make the law."

In 1978, the Commission dug in its heels. "It [the Commission] does not see itself as having a mandate from Parliament to extend preferential treatment, and hence its strategy in this field has been one of actively promoting equality of opportunity."[7]

Third argument: "Our law is the merit principle."

The merit principle underlies the entire staffing and promotion system of the Public Service Commission.[8] Many long pages of its annual reports were devoted to this principle until the *Public Service Employment Act* of 1918. However, it was almost never discussed in the annual reports for the years corresponding to the veterans' return from the two world wars. It also tended to be forgotten towards the end of the 1960s during the wave of bilingualization.

In 1975, the concept of merit conveniently came back into vogue. It was the subject of an entire report, which concluded that many managers could not reconcile the merit principle with the directives on equal opportunity.[9] It reappeared in every Commission annual report of the late 1970s as entire chapters or long paragraphs.

Fourth argument: "Women aren't the only ones."

Women were not the only ones to benefit from the directive imposed upon the public service. Aboriginal peoples and the disabled were also on the list of "minorities". (It is interesting to note that the public service incorrectly referred to women as a minority.) The result was that these minorities became pawns in a power game, as some members of the public service played off the needs of one group against the needs of another. For example, during a conference on the subject, one director said, "I think we should pay more attention to the disabled now." His remark was met

with applause, but one woman pointed out that 50% of the disabled were women. There was a silence. No doubt the phrase "the disabled" had, in the minds of most people, been synonymous with "disabled men".

People who belonged to several "minority" groups at once became the butt of distasteful jokes. An Aboriginal secretary remarked,

> *I kept hearing that I had everything it took to become a deputy minister and that all I needed was a wheelchair. They thought it was funny, but I didn't!*

Fifth argument: "We're in the middle of cutbacks."

As we have seen, 1976 marked the end of the great expansion and of the career aspirations of many men and women.[10] This fact was cited many times as a new technical barrier of the "Eternal Truth" variety. And the cutbacks, which were greater among women at the officer level than for men at the same level, had no other explanation except fate.[11] Women's presence in the public service was increasing, but mainly in the lower ranks, as we shall see.

On the statistical defensive

The second type of defensive stance was the use of statistical interpretation of women's advancement. Statistical methodology can be obscure; many people have neither the time nor the patience to interpret figures. In the case of the public service, statistics are further mystified by an extremely complex structure: six major occupational categories are divided into 77 groups, which in turn are divided into three to eight levels.

Every year the Public Service Commission publishes an annual report describing the year's appointments. For the past several decades, this account was accompanied by a statistical description of the service, which served as the basis for judging the advancement of women. These statistics were far from neutral and lacked precision as statistics frequently do.[12] They could be manipulated in several ways, such as: the big numbers game, ambiguous classification, and the small numbers game.

• *The big numbers game*

Data on the public service are somewhat like the data on Canada: they indicate basic trends such as aging or the average wage, but they are so general that they mask the differences within a group. This becomes obvious when breaking down these trends by region, city, and so on. Before long, the average Canadian appears, featureless, before the statistician's very eyes.

The federal public service, with its quarter of a million employees scattered across the country, has much the same complexity. Like a test tube full of immiscible liquids, it exists only when it is shaken and the liquids break into little droplets, giving the brief illusion of uniform colour.

Generalization, while necessary and inevitable, has its pitfalls when not accompanied by more detailed explanations. The advancement of women in the public service means different things depending on whether one is speaking of women in their thirties or in their fifties, of women working in the regions or in the National Capital Region, of women employed in the major departments or in the central agencies, of English-speaking women or French-speaking women, and so on.

These differences, of course, do not apply solely to women. Men are just as heterogeneous: their career aspirations sometimes vary considerably according to their age, their department, and their geographic location. Nevertheless, this heterogeneity takes on quite a different aspect when seen from the perspective of an equal opportunity program. According to one male regional staffing officer:

> *Psychologically, the existence of these programs tends to inflate aspirations and makes reality harder to accept. Women say "The government says it's doing something for* all *women but it's not true." This adds to their feelings of cynicism and defeat. Some couldn't help blaming themselves for not having been up to scratch.*

Another woman who once worked in the regions added:

> *There was — and still is — a growing sentiment that the government saw women as a small handful of women in Ottawa.*
>
> *There was no distribution of bureaucratic power among men and women; there was gentrification of the upper echelons. That's certainly safer than sharing!*

• *Categorization*

When occupational categories were used to indicate the advancement of target groups, confusion resulted. The creation of these categories in 1966 was extremely well received because they simplified a particularly nebulous system of job classification. However, they also tended to bolster pre-conceived notions which were mainly detrimental to women.

The federal public service comprises six major occupational categories: Management,[13] Scientific and Professional, Administration and Foreign Service, Technical, Administrative Support, and Operational. These categories are both vertical in that they indicate a position in the hierarchy ("Management" and "Administrative Support" categories), and horizontal in that various groups and levels are placed together in the same category.

During the 1970s, the annual reports adopted the arbitrary view that Management, Scientific and Professional, Administrative and Foreign Service, and Technical were officer categories whereas Administrative Support and Operational were non-officer.

The bureaucrats then measured the progress of women by looking at the increase in their numbers in the officer categories, noting with satisfaction that the number of female officers increased constantly from year to year. In 1976, women made up 18.6% of the officer categories. In 1980, they grew to 20.9%.[14]

This process was deceptive for two reasons. First, the occupations placed together in the same category are too disparate. The best example of this is the Scientific and Professional category. Under this promising title are found the ES group (Economics, Sociology and Statistics), which offers real possibilities for advancement, and the group of librarians, whose career prospects were much less rosy. In 1979, the ES group was 85.8% male while the librarians were 66.2% female.[15]

Second, the process is deceptive because the use of officer and non-officer categories conceals the differences in level within each group. Take, for example, the Administrative and Foreign Service category, which supposedly showed the best progress by women. Between 1974 and 1979,

it grew by 15.9% with women taking the lion's share (71.3%) of this growth. Most of the increase occurred in two groups: Program Administration (PM) and Administrative Services (AS). The number of women increased by 114.6% in the first group (compared with an increase of 31.3% for the men) and 180.8% in the second group, more than four times as much as for the men (38.8%).[16]

Looking at these results in more detail, one sees that women were offered the lowest levels of the new positions created, positions which in some cases were but a reclassification of a secretary's or clerk's job to a higher level. As a result, 87% and 79% of the new female arrivals in the PM and AS groups found themselves at the lowest levels (levels 1, 2, and 3) whereas for men these percentages were 61% and 35% respectively.[17]

• *The small numbers game*

The use of small populations to calculate percentages is another problem. Percentages are the essence of economic calculations and opinion polls. They are a simple way to reduce large numbers to one or two figures. However, they lose much of their meaning when used on small populations.

Yet these percentages were used throughout the 1970s as "scientific" proof of the immense progress made by women (or francophones). Table 8 shows how statistics can be used for propaganda purposes, in this case by glossing over the distinction between large and small departments. For example, we are told that in the Federal Court, 95% to 100% of employees in the Scientific and Professional category are women. Then we notice that the total number of employees in this category is one. We are also told that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Civilian) ranks high among equal opportunity departments, with women constituting 40% to 45% of the work force ... which totals seven people (in other words, there are three women). But the uninitiated reader sees only the visual effect of this table, namely an impressive female representation.

This percentage game continued in all the departments. Regrettably, it is still played in the offices of the ministers, who often ask for nothing more than the security of a nice round percentage.

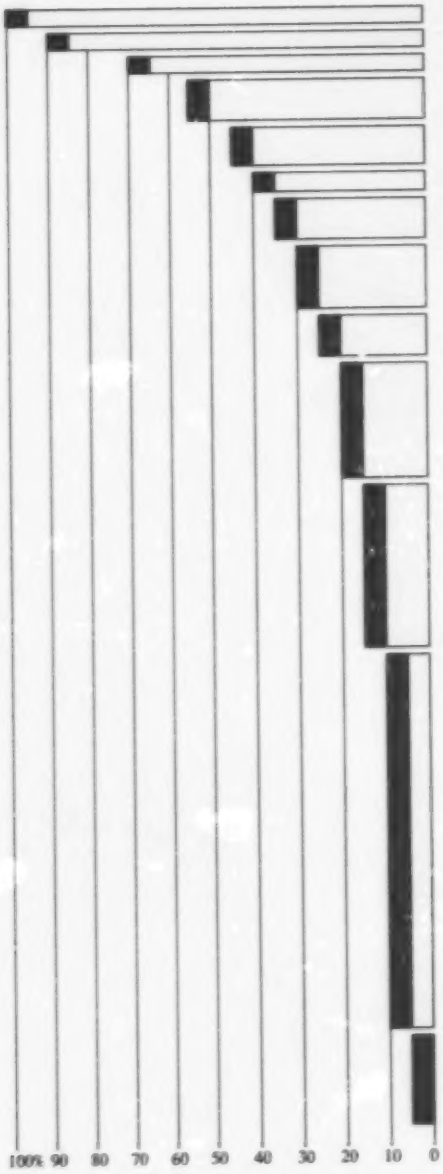
One woman recalled a meeting in the office of a minister, when the director of personnel explained with a perfectly straight face that the number of female managers in his section had increased by 500% over three years.

> *Clearly put, this meant that instead of one woman, there were now five. What he didn't mention was that in the same period of time, instead of 83 men, there were now more than 150 and that his branch had captured a third of the person-years in the Department. But the Minister was busy and expressed satisfaction with the results. I tried to mention it to him later, but was sent packing.*

The first rifts

By the late 1970s, women began to experience "the great rift", as one woman put it. On the one hand, the official voice of the government was showing them statistics to prove that the doors of management had been flung open to them and that they had made great strides. Their male colleagues told them they were lucky to be women because the scales were tipped in their favour. Their reality was, in most cases, more complex. They were trying to juggle their parental duties with full-time jobs. This was no longer 1965, when women of child-bearing age (between 25 and 39) accounted for only 28% of all female public servants. In 1979, they constituted nearly 45.8% of the

Table 8. Percentage of women in the Scientific and Professional category, by department, 1976



Range	Department or Agency	Total employees in category
95-100%	Federal Court	1
85-90%	Veterans' Affairs	1,361
65-70%	National Library	166
50-55%	National Health and Welfare	2,295
	Public Service Commission	1,960
40-45%	RCMP (civilian)	7
	Indian and Northern Affairs	2,667
35-40%	External Affairs	25
30-35%	Solicitor General	29
	Secretary of State	32
25-30%	Science and Technology	14
	National Museums of Canada	107
	Canadian Penitentiary Service	486
20-25%	Public Archives	103
	Privy Council Office	10
15-20%	Statistics Canada	809
	Treasury Board	66
	Justice	461
	In small departments*	32
	Manpower and Immigration	187
10-15%	Labour	52
	Industry, Trade and Commerce	84
	National Defence	1,219
	Regional Economic Expansion	93
	Urban Affairs	45
	Finance	208
	Unemployment Insurance Commission	50
5-10%	Canadian Grain Commission	23
	Consumer and Corporate Affairs	311
	Anti-inflation Board	39
	Canadian International Development Agency	52
	Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission	40
	Post Office	105
	Canadian Pension Commission	46
	Energy, Mines and Resources	1,102
	Canadian Transport Commission	169
	National Energy Board	121
	Auditor General	174
	Environment	2,991
	Agriculture	2,165
	Communications	315
	Supply and Services	372
5% and under	Transport	803
	Bureau of Pension Advocates	35
	National Revenue (Taxation and Customs & Excise)	2,548
	Public Works	625
0%	Insurance	16
	National Parole Board	2

Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1976* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1977), Table 31.
Note: *Departments with fewer than 100 employees.

female work force, a phenomenon never seen before in the labour market. These women were innovators in the career-and-family balancing act in a world that was (and still is) not ready to appreciate the art.[18]

All the female interviewees agreed that toward the mid-1970s, a woman could have children as long as she kept quiet about it. In many job competitions, a member of the jury would often ask the fatal question, "Do you have children?" Some lied, others removed their wedding rings to appear more convincing, while still others admitted to having children and, they claimed, were refused promotions.

For a female manager to come to work pregnant was still a rare event in the 1970s. Those who lived through the experience remember the sometimes violent reactions that their condition elicited. One senior manager hid it as well as she could, until the day everyone found out.

> *All of a sudden I became a nonentity. None of the men would look me in the eye anymore and decisions were made over my head as though it were understood that I would not be coming back.*

The most upsetting example of aggressive behaviour was recounted by a female manager who had a pregnant woman as an employee.

> *She was seen as a feminist by the men in my section, who didn't make life any easier for her. One day there was a fire drill and we all had to walk down the 20 flights of stairs in our building. She came and asked me whether she could take the elevator along with a co-worker who had a heart condition. The guys came to me in a group to say that since she wanted equality, she should take the consequences and walk down the stairs like everyone else.*

Women also experienced the reality behind the statistics, and it was evident to many that the dice were loaded. Two studies documented the difficulties faced by women in the federal public service. The first study, known as the D'Avignon Report (1979), noted the shortcomings of the equal opportunity programs.[19] In 1980, the study published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women stated that "the situation of women in the federal Public Service remains remarkably unchanged."[20]

Finally, women experienced the internal rifts of a group that had never been a group. There were women who embraced feminism and women who wanted nothing to do with it. There were women who helped other women, and women who badly treated their female rivals and subordinates. There were women who made use of their feminine charms to advance their careers, and women who worked furiously and unquestioningly, as many of their mothers and grandmothers had done in other fields. There were women whose careers had been easy, and women who had been psychologically abused. There were mothers desperate for recognition and assistance, and women who failed to see any problem. There were women who did not care about career advancement, and women who wanted their fair share. While the women who wanted their fair share may not have been the most numerous, still they were the most influential, not only because they were the most visible in the hierarchy but also because a supportive feminist consciousness was making its way into the public service. They were the first to start women's networking. One of them summed up the philosophy they developed in these words:

We believed (and some of us still believe) that these networks would counterbalance the male networks that continued to reign over the public service. We thought there was a magic number beyond which women would no longer be perceived as a minority and would no longer meet with resistance from all fronts. We felt that the government should step in, abandon its equal opportunity programs, and create clear and stringent affirmative action programs.

Another concluded with a tinge of bitterness,

We thought that the 1980s would really be the decade of women.

Notes

1. Carolle Simard has divided these organizations into three categories: coordinating bodies (the Anti-Discrimination Directorate and the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women); department sections (each department appoints a coordinator responsible for the promotion of women); and the Canadian Human Rights Commission, created on July 14, 1977, which has the power to investigate instances of alleged discrimination. See: Carolle Simard, *L'administration contre les femmes: La reproduction des différences sexuelles dans la fonction publique canadienne* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1983), pp. 90 and 91.

2. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1977*, *Annual Report 1978*, and *Annual Report 1979* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1978, 1979 and 1980 respectively).

3. The public service male work force decreased from 184,038 in 1975 to 172,644 in 1980, while the female work force increased from 89,129 to 95,487. (These figures include the Post Office. The percentages differ considerably when this department is excluded for purposes of comparison with 1986.)

4. "This increase was more uniform than the increase in the full-time labour force during the same period." [Translation] In Carolle Simard, *L'administration contre les femmes*, p. 99.

5. The concept of quotas is based on the opinion that the only effective way to correct a statistical imbalance is to reserve a specific number of positions for the groups suffering from discrimination. At that time, it was being used in the administration of a number of American universities, and its effectiveness was hotly debated.

6. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1976* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1977), p. 15.

7. This happened to be true. The Veterans' Preference Clause and the *Official Languages Act* were voted by Parliament, to which the Public Service Commission is accountable.

   Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1978*, Vol. 1, p. 17.

8. See: J.E. Hodgetts et al., *The Biography of an Institution: The Civil Service Commission of Canada, 1908-1967* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 287.

9. Canada, *Report of the Special Committee on the Review of Personnel Management and the Merit Principle* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1979).

10. See: Nicole Morgan, *Implosion: An Analysis of the Growth of the Federal Public Service in Canada (1945-1985)* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1986), pp. 113-129.

11. "In 1979, in all three major officer categories — Scientific and Professional, Administrative and Foreign Service, and Technical — women were laid off in far greater numbers than their representation warranted." In Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Women in the Public Service: Overlooked and Undervalued* (Ottawa: October 1980), p. 38.

12. See: Cannie Stark-Adamec, "A Psychologist's Guide to the Conduct of Non-sexist Research", *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie canadienne*, 1984, Vol. 25, No. 5, pp. 23-33.

13. This 1987 category is the amalgamation of the Executive category as defined in the 1970s and a new category created in 1982 called Senior Management.

14. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1977* and *Annual Report 1980* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1978 and 1981 respectively).

15. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1979* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1980).

16. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1974* and *Annual Report 1979* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1975 and 1980 respectively).

17. Calculations based on Table 3.10 in Nicole Morgan with the collaboration of Charles Moubarak, *Nowhere To Go? Possible Consequences of the Demographic Imbalance in Decision-Making Groups of the Federal Public Service* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp. 70-71.

18. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1965* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1966) and *Annual Report 1979* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1980).

19. Canada, *Report of the Special Committee on the Review of Personnel Management and the Merit Principle*, p. 124.

20. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Women in the Public Service*, p. 1.

Sharing (the 1980s)

Women aren't good managers. They're finicky. They overdo it.

Male senior manager, 47

Men aren't good managers. All they care about is their territory and authority.

Female senior manager, 55

In the Throne Speech of April 14, 1980, the government committed itself to establishing an affirmative action program in the federal public service for women, the disabled, and Aboriginal people. On August 1 of the same year, the Treasury Board, Employment and Immigration Canada, and the Secretary of State were designated as pilot departments. Two years later, the Public Service Commission and Environment Canada were added. In June 1983, the program was extended to the entire federal public service. The announcement of such a program came just at the right time because the repatriation of the Constitution in 1981 gave the equality of women a legal and permanent foundation.[1]

Thus legalized, the political order was put into action. The Treasury Board was given the mandate of directing operations. In conjunction with the departments, it had to produce an analysis on the status of their employees in the target groups: women, Aboriginal people, and the disabled. It then had to develop an action plan with numerical targets that would enable such employees to make progress. In July 1985, visible minority women were designated as a specific target group.

The Public Service Commission, in 1983, was given the task of creating a Women's Career Counselling and Referral Bureau[2] to counsel "women who are now in middle management and have the potential to reach senior management, and refer them for consideration for senior management jobs and assignments."[3] At the end of its five-year mandate in 1988, women should hold 12% of the positions in the management category, i.e., rising from 217 in 1983 to 475 on March 31, 1988.

A quota that was not a quota ...

Although this was the only figure announced at the time that remotely resembled a quota, this program was not a true affirmative action program. It was meant to be an ideal quota, not an actual quota. Semantics play an important role here because there is a big difference between an affirmative action program and an equal opportunity program. The difference is that the former actually seeks to remove discriminatory barriers, whereas the latter less ambitiously tries to redress inequalities by setting targets.

The word "quota" evoked, to say the least, negative reactions within the bureaucracy, which had just regained its enthusiasm for the merit principle. According to observers, the Cabinet of the day reacted negatively to quotas because it feared that the running of its affairs would fall into the hands of incompetent women.[4] Tokenism had to be avoided at all costs. To meet this objective, an affirmative action program was initiated which enshrined the merit principle, i.e., to select and promote only **qualified** individuals.[5]

"Targets" were talked about instead of "quotas". Emphasis was placed on what the Public Service Commission referred to as "soft" measures such as lifting systemic barriers.[6] Affirmative action was defined as "a comprehensive systems-based approach to the identification and elimination of discrimination in employment."[7] As a former director of this program put it:

It was merely a rehashed equal opportunity program but no one was fooled.

This type of rhetoric is based on two implicit (but contestable) postulates:

- Men remain the model. Those who have been appointed have always been appointed on the merit principle and are by definition qualified. There is no chance of error.
- Women who are not selected under the terms of this program are by definition not qualified.

According to another interviewee:

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The mandarins had not lost any of their power since they ultimately would have to determine women's qualifications, the ones that were really worthy of the merit principle. Women hadn't won the right to discuss or determine the criteria or to assess the program. They controlled nothing.

And unfortunately ...

More concrete difficulties could be added to these semantic subtleties. For the first time in four decades, the federal public service showed real signs that it was running out of steam. Between 1982 and 1987, its work force decreased by 3.4%. The mobility rate and opportunity for advancement fell, with promotions in particular dropping from 26,360 in 1982 to 16,551 in 1987.[8] In other words, advancement was less possible. The situation was aggravated by the aging of the male population. By 1985, the trend was already clear. That year, as Table 9 shows, in the National Capital Region more than half the men at the middle-management level (53.9%) were between 35 and 49 years old. These men would probably continue their careers in the public service, clustering in increasing numbers at the top of the hierarchy.

Table 9. Age scale of permanent employees in the National Capital Region by hierarchical level and gender, 1985

	EX 4-5		EX 1-3		SM		Senior Managers		Middle Managers		Officers		Support Staff	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
–25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	48	299	651	194	1,291
25-29	0	0	1	0	1	0	12	18	656	468	1,822	2,922	651	2,026
30-34	1	0	16	6	43	20	297	143	2,100	1,129	2,664	3,933	598	1,437
35-39	15	1	185	44	287	63	883	246	3,204	1,102	2,586	2,905	381	1,029
40-44	38	7	346	44	420	45	738	149	2,269	596	1,601	1,706	211	759
45-49	50	1	319	26	356	27	571	68	1,695	327	1,211	1,387	164	655
50-54	64	2	323	15	335	19	498	47	1,463	209	1,272	1,124	187	595
55-59	37	0	209	9	291	11	437	36	1,129	139	1,026	853	177	472
60-64	17	0	102	1	154	4	222	17	680	81	678	536	169	346
65+	1	0	6	0	2	0	8	0	48	2	37	23	8	6

Source: Public Service Commission, unpublished data.
Note: Unknowns excluded.

The federal public service is not the only organization to have experienced this type of situation. Like other bureaucracies, it grows and shrinks, brings in new blood, and grows old in the same manner as all large organizations. When an organization is growing, employee morale is generally good and structural changes or cultural experiments can be made. On the other hand, when it is shrinking, morale drops, individuals tend to protect themselves, and changes are less readily accepted.

However in the 1980s, the public service had to produce a consistent affirmative action program under unfavourable conditions. It must be remembered that two similar large-scale programs for veterans and francophones had been implemented during periods of extraordinary growth.

When the government changed hands in 1984, it bolstered the existing program by setting access quotas to groups other than management and by impressing upon deputy ministers that it would not tolerate excuses. For the first time, the order was accompanied by the famous "or else", an imperative so lacking during initial experiments. The order takes on even greater importance when one remembers that the new government had made an election promise to keep a tighter rein on high-level bureaucrats suspected of having too much of a free hand. A political observer had this to say:

> *The new government wanted results, figures, percentages. It didn't want the same general quotas in the technical sense. Like the previous government, this one hated the word. But it also hated to be kept waiting.*

The government also intended to keep another electoral promise: reducing public service staff continuously over a five-year period. For example, in 1986, the employee population decreased by 2.7%.[9] This did not necessarily mean that laid-off employees found themselves on the street. Most of them were put on short lists giving them priority in closed competitions.

The strain on the system was enormous insofar as every position made available through attrition, separation, or transfer was immediately snatched up from within, scarcely allowing managers to look for young recruits outside, or to bring in promising employees from other departments. The new process hindered mobility within the public service — whether vertical or lateral — to such an extent that some employees felt they had lost two rights or at least two important reasons for choosing the public service: employment security and a career with advancement opportunities.[10]

Thus, in 1985 the organizational question became extraordinarily complicated: how to substantially reduce the employee population through attrition, while asking managers to hire and promote a greater number of women and other target groups?

The question of organizational behaviour was no easier: how did men's and women's emotions, values, and behaviour evolve in such a restrictive situation? The answer to this question is that they were complex and sometimes contradictory.

A complex reality

Compared with the difficult years of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s will undeniably be regarded as an important step forward for women in the federal public service hierarchy.

• ***Progress has been made***

The number of women in the public service continued to increase faster than the number of their male colleagues. Between 1980 and 1987, the female employee population grew by 15.4% whereas the male's decreased by 4.4%. This growth, added to the phenomenal increase of women during the 1970s, meant that between 1976 and 1987 the female work force rose by 8,483, whereas the male work force lost 21,765.[11] In other words, since 1976 only the female population of the federal public service has grown.

During the cutbacks of 1985, 1986, and 1987, men suffered more severe losses than women. Their number dropped by 5.1%, whereas that of women fell by 2.0%. At 51% of the Canadian population, women are closer to attaining numerical parity. In 1987, they made up 42.4% of public service staff.[12]

If this differential rate of increase and decrease continues for the next few years, women should attain overall parity by the end of the 1990s, and perhaps even before if several accelerating factors are taken into account. First, since the men are older than the women, attrition through retirement will be more significant among men. For example, 15.0% of men should retire within ten years, as compared to only 8.1% of women.[13] Second, young men are less and less recruited by the federal public service. In 1976, young men under the age of 25 represented 10.7% of the male work force in the public service, whereas in 1987 they represented no more than 2.0%.[14] In comparison, young women under 25 years of age made up 5.2% of the female public service work force.

As Table 10 shows, the growth of women has been particularly felt at the management level of the hierarchy. In 1985 there were three times as many female managers as in 1976.

Table 10. Female population in the Federal Public Service, by hierarchical level, 1976 and 1985

	1976*	1985
EX 4-5	3	12
EX 1-3	39	163
SM	47	223
Senior managers	300	899
Middle managers	2,237	6,194
Total	**2,626**	**7,491**

Source: Public Service Commission, unpublished data.
Note: *The levels EX and SM did not exist as such in 1976. They have been reconstituted for purposes of comparison with later years.
Postal workers and nurses excluded.
Unknowns excluded.

The newness of the effort is indirectly proven by the age pyramid in Table 9, which shows that new female senior managers, at least in the National Capital Region, are remarkably young. As a matter of fact, 38.9% of them — at EX and SM levels — are under the age of 40, whereas the proportion for their male counterparts is 15.1%.

The age pyramid also seems to indicate that the federal public service has finally accepted mothers. In previous decades, women were younger than men (most of them were under 25 years of age) and left during their childbearing years. In 1962, the 30- to 34-year-old group represented 8% of the female employee population.[15] In 1987, this group accounted for 20.8% and was the most numerous group.[16]

Between 1985 and 1987, the promotion rate among women was higher than that of men.[17] It was particularly dramatic at the management level, with 29.1% for women and only 13.3% for men in 1987, as well as in the Administration and Foreign Service category where the percentages were 13.2% for women and 7.4% for men.[18]

By many accounts, qualitative as well as quantitative progress was made. Several of the women interviewed spoke of the beginnings of solidarity among women:

> *It isn't the equivalent of an old boys' network as yet, but it's a start. In my group, I've made a point of bringing in the most competent women I could find. My goal is to reach a critical mass that will do away with the raised eyebrows of the past.*

New social habits such as regular networking breakfasts or lunches began to bring together female managers who exchanged valuable information and gave many others the opportunity to share their experience. According to some women, attitudes towards working women have changed.

> *We are better accepted and we no longer hear outdated remarks or jokes in bad taste.*

> *Our colleagues are men whose wives work outside the home. Even though it gets their goat, they can't say so openly. They're forced to accept it in their personal lives and at the office.*

A former Torontonian adds:

> *In Ottawa you're starting to see the impossible — a man and a woman lunching together as colleagues.*

Others believe that managers have got into the habit and acquired the reflex of giving women a real chance, as evidenced by what this female manager had to say:

> *We can now find mentors and we all know that in the public service we can't do anything without a mentor. It takes power to move careers and change organizations. This is never talked about in affirmative action plans but it is the key to power, the reality of the organization. I'm convinced that women can only make progress from the top and things are happening at the top. In 1987, deputy ministers finally took the matter seriously.*

Finally, a small minority thinks that things have gone so much in favour of women that they have arrived and should keep quiet now:

> *Progress has obviously been made; now it's up to us to prove that we can measure up to it. Whining about inequality is outdated. Now, we have to work.*

• ***Distortions***

As in the previous decade, distortions show up in these optimistic results when examined more closely (by analysing subgroups) or from a global view (by analysing the dynamics of the entire organization). It is as if the present were only the product of farsightedness coupled with nearsightedness.

• *Dynamics of the organization*

There are two ways to study women's "progress" in the public service. One, which is relatively elitist, calculates the proportion of female representation in relation to that of men occupying senior levels (i.e., women will have parity when there are as many EX and SM women as men).[19] The other method, which takes into account the entire group of men and women, compares the manner in which hierarchical levels evolve in the respective populations.

To date, the official approach has used only the first perspective, concentrating its efforts on female executives rather than male executives. From this perspective, women accounted for only 2.4% of this group in 1976 and 8.7% in 1987.[20] Progress has been made.

But this tells only a small part of the story because the male career pyramid did not stand still while women climbed upward. It followed its own dynamics, in particular that of assembling the troops at the top, to the detriment of the lower level, in a reptilian movement referred to as "creep-up".

Take for example the National Capital Region, where women's progress in the management ranks is perceived, and rightly so, as being particularly significant. By comparing the 1980s to the 1970s, we can see, as indicated in Table 11, that the female population has indeed increased at the management levels. In 1976, only 0.3% of female public servants in the National Capital Region were at an executive level, in contrast to 1.1% in 1985; 0.8% were at the senior level, compared to 2.4% in 1985; and 6.6% were at the middle management level in relation to 13.7% in 1985, double the 1976 figure.

Table 11. Permanent employee population of the National Capital Region by hierarchy, 1976 and 1985

	1976				1985			
	Men	**%**	**Women**	**%**	**Men**	**%**	**Women**	**%**
Executives*	2,850	7.8	81	0.3	3,620	9.9	345	1.1
Senior managers	2,794	7.7	200	0.8	3,666	10.0	724	2.4
Middle managers	10,541	29.0	1,571	6.6	13,289	36.4	4,101	13.7
Non-managers**	20,210	55.5	21,882	92.2	15,953	43.7	24,642	82.6
Total* **	36,395	100.0	23,734	100.0	36,528	100.0	29,812	100.0

Source: Federal Public Commission, unpublished data.

Notes: *EX 4-5, EX 1-3, and SM. (For comparison purposes, these groups were reconstituted for 1976.)
**Officers and Support staff. Postal workers and nurses excluded.
***Some percentages have been rounded off.
Unknowns excluded.

This is undeniable progress which would pave the way to an equal future if Table 11 did not reveal two other trends of considerable consequence. The first indicates that men too have made the same remarkable advances within their hierarchy. In 1976, 7.8% of them were at an executive level, as opposed to 9.9% in 1985; 7.7% were at the senior manager level, compared with 10% in 1985; and 29% were at the middle manager level in relation to 36.4% in 1985.

The fundamental issue that this first trend raises is the difference in speed at which both groups have advanced. Because women have lagged behind in the past, they will never catch up to men unless their advancement is more rapid, which does not seem to be the case.

The second trend complements the first. Table 11 also shows that 4,257 men have left the lowest levels of the pyramid, to be largely replaced by some 2,760 new women recruits swelling the ranks of the non-management levels. The question is: are we heading towards a public service in which the non-management levels will "belong" to women while the management levels will be divided between men and women, with men always managing to stay one step ahead? One might question whether this is really progress. What does the advancement of some women mean if the bottom of the ladder is always reserved for women?

Some interviewees recognized the continuing trend of women clustered at the bottom. Career women may manage departments but, as one woman mentioned,

> *... people don't see that the most thankless work is more than ever done by women, that all the women who want both a career and children employ immigrant women to do their housework at low wages.*

Others, as we have seen, talked about the gentrification of Ottawa:

> *It's as if a new identity has been created in the public service — public service couples* working *their careers like you would work a family business. Then there's the other Ottawa, the one that doesn't change, the one with thousands of women who ruin their eyes on word processing screens or under photocopier lights.*

Finally, a former secretary deplored the working conditions of her female co-workers which, far from improving, have deteriorated over the years.

> *Their work has been depersonalized; they're now in noisy* [*typing or word processing*] *pools and they're more neglected than ever.*

Another added that, in her perception, the women managing them are worse than the men and are unforgiving.

> *The tension is mounting in the ranks of the forever embattled support staff who, instinctively, have less tolerance for dominance by women than by men.*

• *Group dynamics*

Many women's careers are channeled into limited, gender-typed occupations. Let us have a look at a few large groups where women are significantly represented other than as clerks and stenographers, such as the Administrative Services (AS), Program Administration (PM), and Personnel Administration (PE) groups. During the 1980s as in the 1970s, women have considerably swelled the ranks of these groups.

From 1981 to 1987, the number of women in the AS group grew from 3,645 to 5,012, an increase of 37.5%, whereas the number of men increased from 5,637 to 5,935, or 5.3%.[21]

Female program administrators (PM) developed in much the same manner: their number increased from 7,484 in 1981 to 9,239 in 1987, an increase of 23.4%, while the number of men fell by 11.0% from 17,654 to 15,717.[22]

The PE group experienced the same trend. Its female population climbed from 1,139 in 1981 to 1,452 or 27.5% in 1987, while its male population decreased by 21.1% from 1,760 to 1,388.[23] The number of women in this group will increase further, because a 1986 news release signed by

the president of the Treasury Board has designated it as a quota group. "Appointments of women as directors and directors general of personnel will be increased, to help ensure their representation in these positions reaches 28.5 per cent by 1988."[24]

The "progress" that women have experienced in the three groups merits some discussion. Historically, the Program Administration group seems to have served as a catch-all for the federal service and has included, in particular, a large number of veterans. The Administrative Services and PM groups often serve the public service itself. They are non-professional groups where many reclassified clerks or project heads can be found. As for the Personnel Administration group, any self-respecting public servant cannot help but look a gift horse in the mouth; for in times of cutbacks and austerity, this job is particularly unpopular and stressful. In addition, PEs are no longer paid on a performance basis as they were in the past.

The trends observed among these groups seem to validate the hypothesis that the labour market tends to group women in the service areas (purchasing, personnel, and public relations).

• *Specialists in the advancement of women*

Distortions in group dynamics within the public service are coupled with a distortion that could be referred to as the bureaucratization of affirmative action programs. As with any program, this one needed to be developed, directed, and evaluated. After 1983, in particular, all government departments were required to set up their own affirmative action centre responsible for establishing priority programs, gathering and analysing data (in four parts[25]), determining the impact on personnel, and making recommendations.

These efforts resulted in a significant increase in middle and senior managers working in this area, with women occupying the majority of the positions. Although figures are sketchy, the program in each department seems to be handled by at least three employees. On average, three-quarters of all employees are women. However, as of 1986, their numbers have increased considerably because of Treasury Board directives which state, "An additional $15.8 million and 400 person-years over the next three years will be allocated to support these initiatives."[26] Consequently, in certain departments, a sometimes significant number of female managers are "mobilized", then "neutralized" as one affirmative action director put it:

> *We look good in the statistics because we're managers and at the same time we make no waves, because our job is to bring minorities into a public service which is shrinking and has no room for anyone. This is a way of putting us back in the kitchen, in other words, in our place!*

The fact that the program is very difficult to carry out in a climate of austerity has an important consequence: anger among women about the slow progress is transferred to the women responsible for such programs who are often accused of "making a career on the backs of others" (this theme came up often during the interviews).

For others, the bitterest irony lies in the selection of people to administer the affirmative action programs. It was said many times that particular care was taken to select candidates who would not upset the *status quo* or trample on territories. As one female employee lamented,

> *The most dynamic and feminist women could never even get close to being put in charge of such programs... and when one of them accidentally slips in, she's made to toe the line.*

Strained sentiments

Obviously, all these hierarchical ambiguities will be partially reflected in the perceptions of a bureaucratic culture already severely shaken by recent cutbacks.

All the interviewees recognized that the situation is highly emotional. Where men were once sceptical or annoyed, they are now openly concerned, as evidenced by the following statements by women:

> *Before the 1980s, men used to joke about women's promotions. Today they look dazed, as if they're saying, "No kidding! You mean they're really going to replace me with that woman?"*

> *As if to prove something to themselves, men in 1987 are examining each appointment of a woman with a fine-tooth comb, and their comments are not exactly generous.*

> *We're all suspected of being incompetent. We're all lumped into one category, whether we're feminists or not, whether we're for or against affirmative action programs.*

In short, men have started to complain more and more openly of reverse discrimination.[27] During the interviews, all of them expressed fear and frustration. Almost all of them stated that things had gone too far and that women no longer needed an affirmative action program. The least vehement ones were the older men, who had been so reluctant to accept women as peers in the past. Here is what one of them had to say:

> *I must say that I am pleasantly surprised. Not only do the women I've hired work well but they're a lot more loyal than the men.*

The younger ones, on the other hand, were openly concerned. One of them feared that men would now be given their walking papers. Most believe that "it is impossible to make a career in the federal public service today." One 28-year-old had just resigned and explained why:

> *Only the women have a chance. Whenever there is a little opening, they get it. I have nothing against that because I know they were treated very badly in the past. But what they're doing now is ridiculous. They're going from one extreme to the other and I don't want to experience reverse racism [sic] or undergo an operation.*

(This last theme came up in many of the men's comments.)

Another strange but frequent attitude in the public service is that some young francophone men are convinced they are the "fifth wheel", as one of them put it.

> *They want to recruit women from the outside. Francophones in general will have to bear the brunt of this, and francophone men in particular. Anglophone men can hold their own.*

Their anglophone colleagues, however, are convinced the opposite is true. One theme that came up throughout the interviews was that now an affirmative action plan would be needed for anglophone men, who are discriminated against in each staffing action.

Men in their forties expressed the most vehement frustration. In addition to the concerns raised by the younger men, some of the men in this age bracket live in fear that, if the cuts continue and affirmative action programs are stepped up, men will have to be dismissed in order to make room for women.

It is interesting to note that none of the men who felt threatened said they were against equality for women. One of them humorously explained,

> *It's a little like the sexual freedom of the 1960s: we were all for it, provided it was in our interest and our wives weren't involved.*

While not all the men necessarily felt the fear of losing their jobs, they all nevertheless expressed the fear of no longer being promoted. They were particularly obsessed by the idea that the rare openings would go to women, including their own wives. As a middle manager explained:

> *Women's revolution or not, whether you respect your wife or not, when she comes and tells you that she has been promoted — she or one of her friends — you feel cheated. It's difficult for me, it's difficult for us. My wife is two levels higher than I am now. I know she's very competent, but so am I and I know that to a certain extent her promotion is due to something artificial. So sometimes I'm furious and our marriage suffers.*

Many interviewees felt that a backlash was developing that would be expressed in threats and reprisals, some of an infantile, schoolyard nature.

> *I have two male friends who have always been very open with respect to women. They helped when they were able and, everything considered, they're good guys. I met them the other day and they were beside themselves. "We're fed up. If they at least appointed intelligent women ... but it's becoming ridiculous." One of them even said, "The next woman I come across, even if she's good, I'll put her through the wringer and make her pay for the others!"*

> *In two or three years' time, they'll be woman-bashing just the way they used to play at French-bashing. It will be even more violent against women. The anti-francophone movement was limited to rednecks, and could express itself freely through politicians and the newspapers. But at the moment they don't even have the right to openly say that they're fed up with women. So when the time comes, it's going to be pretty violent.*

Some of the women interviewed were convinced that a witch hunt was already under way, especially against feminists.

> *All the women who participated in the movement in the 1970s and did so sincerely, not for their own career, paid a very high price [in the 1980s] in one form or another: reputations destroyed forever, impossibility of finding work outside female occupations, ostracism, etc.*

The tactics were becoming trivial and childish: newspaper articles attempting to prove that feminist arguments are wrong were systematically posted on staff bulletin boards, newspaper cuttings of lingerie were systematically sent to a woman known for her participation in the women's movement. One woman manager seemed to be the target of a vendetta:

This year I took part in 15 competitions and wasn't successful in any of them. For some, I knew I wasn't well prepared but for others I felt that my chances were good, and in one or two cases, I was clearly made to feel that I was the favoured candidate. But each time, at the last minute, my calls were no longer being returned. So I asked to see my competition file. I was dumbfounded. In my official report, signed by my old boss and myself, my evaluation was exceptional. He had praised my work. But in the competition file, the one that is never shown and which contains references for a specific competition, it was quite another story. It was one criticism after another. What shocked me the most was a sentence which was underlined, "She's a feminist who surrounds herself only with women." The worst thing is that I don't consider myself a feminist and am not considered to be one by feminists. But the sentence was there. And to top it all off, it was picked up by someone in the same office who had never worked for or with me and who was two levels below me. He took the trouble to repeat the derogatory accusation. That day I understood. I still can't get over it.

It should not be assumed, however, that women are remaining calm in the face of men's anger, in the quiet certainty that these are only normal reactions which will blow over in time. Some women believe this, but many are less optimistic. Many can no longer bear having it thrown in their faces, more or less openly, that they are there only because of political will.[28]

At least veterans could hold their head high, they deserved something. Francophones, too, to a certain extent — they had a reason for being there. But me! How can I respond to all those insinuations? That I produced three children for the country? I feel humiliated, worthless, and I can't stand it any longer.

During the interviews it became apparent that women over 45 were particularly frustrated.

The Commission attaches great importance to those remarkably competent young women who are recruited externally, implying that we don't exist or aren't competent.

It's very unfair! I know so many women my age who have degrees, are competent and experienced. For years they have experienced all types of humiliation and now when it's our turn, we're told it's too late. I feel like crying.

A 51-year-old woman mentioned that the group responsible for discovering female talent advised her to think of early retirement because "at her age", she should not expect to be promoted.

In addition, francophone and minority women had a lot to say on the difficulties of accumulating so many promotable "assets". One of them summed up the situation this way:

Not only do we not manage like men, but we also do it the French way. This means that we are often too frank. We're immediately perceived as aggressive. Just think! Not only women but Latin women!

The point of view often given by regional women is that Ottawa is not interested in their lot, and life has not changed much for them.

We do not count. It is Ottawa, only Ottawa, again Ottawa.

Finally, a group of women expressed a particular difficulty: that of feeling pushed into a career they did not want. Some mistook government initiatives, designed to help all women, as enforced directives to advance in their careers.

Life is funny! I file all day long and I think I could have been happy with it. But now, two friends of mine have gone through training courses. So I say to myself, I should think about climbing the ladder too, and I make myself unhappy.

It was so much better when everyone knew their place. Everyone adapted and was at peace with themselves. Today I see poor young women trying to be superwomen and I find them crying in the washroom. Everyone is frustrated, everyone is complaining.

Discouragement among women (exacerbated by the difficulties of raising a young family) was not unique to the federal public service. It sometimes translated into abrupt departures from other workplaces by women with promising futures. A survey of women ten years after they obtained their MBAs indicated that a significant percentage of them have left a traditional male career within a rigid structure for other occupations, including motherhood.[29]

This phenomenon is also true in the public service. As Table 12 shows, in 1987, more women voluntarily left the federal service than did men, except in the management category. For example, only 2.9% of men from the Scientific and Professional category resigned, whereas 9.9% of their female counterparts decided to leave the federal bureaucracy. One may get a glimpse of women's reasons for leaving the public service from information gleaned during the interviews.

Table 12. Resignations by occupational category and gender, 1987

	Men			Women		
	Total	Resignations	%	Total	Resignations	%
Management	4,040	63	1.6	481	4	0.8
Scientific and Professional	17,109	509	2.9	5,563	550	9.9
Administrative and Foreign Service	34,328	775	2.2	20,403	653	3.2
Technical	22,732	423	1.9	3,611	186	5.1

Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1988).

Some women left for more attractive opportunities in the provincial public services of Quebec and Ontario. Some set up their own businesses. Others attributed their departure to pregnancy. Still others left simply out of frustration with the working environment in the federal public service.

It's too badly managed. People are just jockeying for position. We haven't come out of the military structure. I thought we were going to provide a service, which is what I came away to do, in my own way.

It's too hard. I'd never take the abuse from a lover or my husband that I did from my bosses. It's too degrading, having the impression of not accomplishing anything and accepting insults from the higher-ups. Now I'm on my own.

It should be pointed out that some of the men interviewed expressed similar reasons for wanting to leave. However, they thought female public servants in 1987 had every reason to be happy. Women, clearly, did not agree unanimously.

Notes

1. See: Anne F. Bayefsky and Mary Eberts, eds., *Equality Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Toronto: Carswell, 1985).

2. All of the affirmative action activities for women are overseen by the Women's Programs Centre which coordinates the activities of the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women and the Women's Career Counselling and Referral Bureau. The Office provides assistance and information, a liaison newsletter and counselling services, and examines selection standards to ensure that there are no discriminatory practices.

3. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Women in the Federal Public Service of Canada: A Decade of Change* (Ottawa: 1985), p. 7.

4. Arlene Paton, "Women in Management: Affirmative Action and Merit in the Federal Public Service", Master's research project, School of Administration, Queen's University, Kingston, 1985, p. 11.

5. What made it compatible with the merit system is: "It cannot be overemphasized that the affirmative action program implemented in 1983 does not conflict with merit, which requires that only qualified persons be appointed." In Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1983* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1984), p. 16.

6. Systemic discrimination "means practices or attitudes that have ... the effect of limiting an individual's or a group's rights to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics ... it [discrimination] is the accidental by-product of innocently motivated practices or systems." In Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1984), p. 2.

7. "It makes use of detailed analyses to identify and systematically remove employment policies, practices and procedures which may exclude or place at a disadvantage the three target groups." In Canada, Treasury Board, "Affirmative Action in Federal Public Service", *News Release* (Ottawa: June 27, 1983), p. 1.

8. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1982* and *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1983 and 1988 respectively).

9. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1986* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1987).

10. Promotions dropped from 19,172 in 1984 to 16,551 in 1987. [Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1984* and *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1985 and 1988 respectively).]

11. Calculations based on the 1980 and 1987 Annual Reports. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1980* and *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1981 and 1988 respectively). Canada Post was excluded from the 1980 and 1976 totals for the purpose of comperison with 1987.

12. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1985* and *Annual Report 1987*.

13. Proportion of men and women age 55 or more. (Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987*.)

14. *Ibid.*

15. Canada, Civil Service Commission, *Annual Report 1962* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1963).

16. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987*.

    Because no census of this group has been taken in the public service, we are forced to make an assumption on the basis of the overall Canadian population. Most of the women in this group are mothers.

17. Calculated as a percentage of the number of promotions out of a given population in the public service. (Source: Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1985* and *Annual Report 1987*.)

18. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1987*.

19. See the work of Conrad Winn, "Affirmative Action and Visible Minorities: Eight Premises in Quest of Evidence", *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de politiques*, Vol. XI, No. 4, December 1985, pp. 684-700.

20. And 11.1% if we exclude the SM group.

21. Canada, Public Service Commission, *Annual Report 1982* and *Annual Report 1987* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1983 and 1988 respectively).

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. Canada, Treasury Board, "Enhanced employment opportunities to help visible minority persons and other affirmative action target groups", *News Release* (Ottawa: June 26, 1986), p. 2.

25. Namely:
    - to compare the characteristics of each target group;
    - to calculate the availability of the target group inside or outside the public service;
    - to compare between the group and the availability;
    - to establish trends.

26. Canada, Treasury Board, "Enhanced employment opportunities ...", p. 1.

27. See the work of Morton Weinfeld, "The Social Costs of Discrimination in Canada", in Canada, *Research Studies of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment* (Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1985), pp. 387-400, and that of Walter Block and Michael Walker, "Introduction", in *Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity* (Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1981), pp. 5-31.

28. See: Frank Musten, "Affirmative Action: A Token for the Times", *Ottawa Business Life*, September/October 1984, pp. 8, 21-25.

29. Alex L. Taylor, "Why Women Managers Are Bailing Out", *Fortune*, August 18, 1986. See also: Sarah Hardesty and Nehama Jacobs, *Success and Betrayal: The Crisis of Women in Corporate America* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1986).

Conclusion

Over the course of the past 80 years, women have been employed in ever growing numbers in a variety of workplaces. Some of these settings have created possibilities for women to advance from entry-level to managerial positions; others have attempted to inhibit their advancement, or have relegated them to low-status, unskilled, part-time, and poorly paid jobs. Employers still seem sometimes to assume that women work not from economic need or the desire for careers, but for frivolous reasons; they posit that women workers are qualitatively different from men workers. In time, section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* may be called upon to adjudicate imbalances in hiring, career development, promotions, and power. Meanwhile, if equality of opportunity and advancement is to occur, employers must recognize their responsibilities and initiate pro-active efforts.

The federal public service, as the largest employer of women in Canada with its 90,000 female employees, is highly visible by reason of its size. More importantly, the national government as an employer is significant because it is the national government. It has the capacity to create a model work setting that the private sector could emulate. Precisely because of its power, it has a responsibility to do so.

The history of the public service has been a conflicted story of advances and setbacks for women. Rather than establishing itself as a model, it has lagged behind public opinion about women's place in the labour force. It has, for the most part, assumed that women workers were less valuable than men workers, less capable, and unable to assume power. Throughout the twentieth century, the public service, like other employers, has been reluctant to alter its assumptions about the inappropriateness of women as employees, finding places for them only when the economy or the fortunes of war required their presence — and even then, reluctantly.

Women's progress in the public service has been by no means unmitigated. In fact, it has resembled a game of snakes and ladders. At times, women have advanced up the rungs; at others they have tumbled to the ground only to lift themselves up and start the game again. For the women who worked in the public service, the equality issue has been deadly serious. For some elements of the bureaucracy, it has meant playing the equality game, as opposed to treating women as equals.

With the women's movement and concomitant social and political changes of the past 15 years, the public service has begun to respond not only to its need for personnel but to the need for more egalitarian workplaces. To this end, some suggestions are offered on pages 65-66. Change may be slow, but by attending to the needs of women employees, the public service could serve as a leader and a model for other employers.

> *We shouldn't let these difficulties get the better of us. They're part of change and our society, as the bureaucracy changes. These difficulties will be settled when a new generation replaces us. There will be other rules, other expectations, and another language of emotions.*

Confronted with the challenge of conflict, men and women have been forced to take a good hard look at each other and to question forms of management that used to be appropriate when the public service was largely made up of veterans.

> *This is not a sexual [gender] crisis but a management crisis. We're coming to the conclusion that we're different.*

Differences in male and female attitudes emerged often during the interviews conducted for this book. The women felt themselves "more courageous, more oriented toward service and values". Men instead saw women as "finicky, focussed on procedures rather than ideas". Women saw themselves as "concerned about their employees and about others in general", while men thought them "incapable of delegating and not being able to find the balance between authority and indulgence". Francophone women considered themselves "culturally misunderstood"; anglophone men found them "too emotional".

One man who was interviewed predicted that such differences would be the spark that would transform the working atmosphere within the public service. The balanced, representative presence of both women and men in the public service would no doubt create change. While such change may not necessarily mean progress, at the very least its prospect demands self-consciousness, intelligence, good faith, and political will. These may lead to equality in the public service. However, prophecies do not come easily.

In the short-term, an aging male population in the public service will tend to occupy the middle and the upper levels of the hierarchy, resulting in a concentration of power among them. Younger women will probably replace men at the bottom of the pyramid. These changes could result in an increasing gap between the salaries of women and men, although women may ultimately move up the rungs of the employment ladder. In the long-term, if the men at the top are not replaced by other men, the public service may become feminized, encountering the fate of other feminized sectors of the economy like teaching, clerical work, and now law, i.e., the loss of prestige and power. This trend, against a backdrop of privatization, may work against the best interests of women.

Other factors will play a role in women's capacity to be equal partners in the public service. These include the future of the service sector in the labour market, which is no more predictable than the international economy and the possibility of a mixed model in the public service, in which more services are contracted out to private enterprise. Women may leave the public service for career opportunities in the private sector; the federal public service may become a less attractive employer to seasoned female public servants seeking a second career. Women's prospects also depend on the federal-provincial balance of power, which some experts say is shifting toward the provinces. Their future at either level depends on the employment needs of other target groups, and on the political will to accommodate them. Another factor which may inhibit or enhance women's participation at senior levels will be the public service's willingness to acknowledge women's responsibilities.

Women can bring about few of the changes which will create an equal, non-discriminatory workplace, because they do not yet occupy powerful enough positions. At this time, women can only speak out, putting pressure on the political will of powerful men. The opinions, thoughts, and concerns of the women employed in the federal public service should be actively sought. Women's voices must be heard. Women in the public service have seen programs come and go. They have experienced, and they continue to see, both discriminatory and supportive attitudes which affect their jobs and careers. If true and lasting progress is ever to be made — if the equality game is to be played out for the good of all — the experiences, thoughts, and desires of women working in all departments and at all levels must be heard in good faith.

Author's proposals for action

The author would like to make the following specific proposals for action in light of her analysis of the preceding study of women in the federal public service.

I Considering that
- women in the federal public service share the status of a minority with other groups: disabled persons, Aboriginal people, and visible minorities;
- this definition is not numerical but qualitative: women are treated like a minority even though they account for almost half of the employee population (This is true although the gender category transcends all others. Aboriginal people, visible minorities, the disabled, **must** be identified by gender);

the author proposes that the gender category be **distinct** and not be in obvious competition with the other categories.

II Considering that
- the bureaucracy is required to report on women's progress within its own structure;
- this practice obviously creates a conflict of interest;

the author proposes that an independent body be set up which will have direct access to data. It would periodically publish an analysis of women's progress, as the Commissioner of Official Languages does for language issues.

III Considering that
- women at the top of the hierarchy (deputy ministers), like men, are appointed by Order-in-Council backed by internal recommendations;
- this practice enables the culture to be reproduced and thereby allows women representatives to be selected who will be less threatening to the culture;

the author proposes that an independent body be authorized to propose and advise on candidates at this level.

IV Considering that
- women and men in the Management category may participate in competitions of this group "upon invitation only";
- the control exerted by this type of invitation reproduces power games;

the author proposes that

1. competitions for such positions be open, as they are for any other position in the public service;
2. the list of "high-potential employees" be made public.

V Considering that participation in competitions is accompanied by a request for references which, in certain cases, may take the form of a denunciation;

the author proposes that all evaluations and references be made known to the candidates.

VI Considering that women are seeking equality and not preferential treatment;

the author proposes that anonymous written examinations be instituted.

VII Considering that
- the problem of child care is even more crucial now that women in the paid labour force often have young children;
- child-care services are already provided in some departments;

the author proposes that child-care services be extended throughout the entire public service.

VIII Considering that
- the home and family are still the responsibility of most women;
- the federal public service does not grant pension benefits for part-time work even though other provincial public services do;

the author proposes that the Treasury Board grant equal benefits (on a pro rata basis) to part-time workers.

IX Considering that
- the anonymity of public service texts allows the system to reproduce itself;
- much talent, including that of women, remains hidden;

the author proposes that all texts (memos, studies, etc.) be signed by the authors before being signed by their supervisor.

X Considering that
- for decades, the federal government has been speaking on behalf of women in the public service, but has published very little on what women themselves think of their treatment;
- it would be useful to combine statistical analyses with a series of surveys;

the author proposes that the federal government appoint an ombudsperson who would have the power, in particular, to conduct a survey on the experience and perception of blatant discrimination and to take corrective measures.

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